Dimensions of history

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To

Tauseef Ahmad Bhatti

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Creative Destruction?

When the maker becomes the breaker

Generally, a writer is very ambitious about publicising his writings. He goes through a lot to manage the launching of his book, to get favourable reviews from the critics, and get publicity which attracts readers to buy it. If it becomes a bestseller, he becomes a celebrity. He is invited by universities and literary and academic organisations for lectures. Thus, he earns not only fame but also financial independence. However, for a Pakistani writer, it is only a dream to acquire fame and money on the basis of his/her writings. Still, many here try to popularise their writings and wish to become well-known intellectuals. Why does a writer make such great efforts to propagate his writings? Perhaps, he wants that others should also share what he has written and appreciate its creativity. Or, he wants that he should be remembered by posterity on the basis of his writings. Or, he wants to educate people and create an awareness of the existing problems of society. Maybe, in some cases, his writings reflect human nature, lead to understanding human being and add to the corpus of philosophical knowledge. That is why some writers claim that they write for the benefit of society in addition to their own self pleasure or satisfaction. However, it is the law of history that the writings of only some writers survived and remembered for generation while the majority of writers and their writings are forgotten with the passage of time. Even those who were very well-known in their own time have often failed to be remembered by their writings. Books of some of these writers remain in bookshelf of the libraries, gathering dust without a reader in sight. Only

those writings survive which have creativity and thought-provoking ideas.

History has seen some writers whose ultimate ambition was not just merely to be published. Virgil (d 19 BC), the great Roman poet, asked his friend to burn his classical poem Aeneid. His wish was not fulfilled by his friend and the poem survived. Why did he want to burn it? We do not have any positive or definitive answer. Perhaps, he underestimated the power and value of his poetry or maybe he believed that it was not relevant to his time. It could even be so that he had contempt for his contemporaries and he was not in favour of being included amongst writers he considered mediocre. It is difficult to fathom the real cause. However, when it survived it became a classic and made Virgil immortal, against his own wishes. In another example, Seneca (d 65 AD), the famous Roman Stoic philosopher and the teacher of the Roman emperor Nero, burnt his writings before committing suicide. We can possibly assume that perhaps he was disillusioned of his time. Nero, who was neurotic, first exiled him from Rome and then ordered him to commit suicide. Under these circumstances, he probably realised that there was no relevance of his philosophical ideas. Though the Stoic philosophy forbids suicide, he committed it under duress. But some of his writings survived which keep him alive to this day.

In Medieval Europe, the Christian church became very powerful. It set up the Inquisition to deal with those who dissented and challenged the orthodox teachings of the church. Geocentricism was one of the ideas which were believed to be true and denial of it was a sin in the eye of the church. However, in spite of the restrictions of the church, scientists were to find out the truth. After Copernicus, Galileo challenged it and proved the correctness of heliocentricism. Thus, he had to face the Inquisition that forced him to recant from his ideas. He did

it, just to save his life. When the trial was reported to the French philosopher Descartes, he silently put his manuscript in the drawer. It was published after his death and changed the whole course of philosophy. Adam Smith, the author of The Wealth of Nations, burnt 16 volumes of his writing before his death. Again, it is difficult to understand why he did it. In his time, there was no censorship and no restrictions on the writings of intellectuals. He had already published some of his books and had earned some renown for his idea at the time. Perhaps, he underestimated his other writings comparing to his published work. Or it could be that he wanted to be remembered by his famous book The Wealth of Nations as an economist and not as an all-round writer. It is said that among the burnt manuscripts was his work on jurisprudence. He did not spare it either because of its novel ideas or of its low standard. We can only speculate about his motivations but it was undeniable that, whatever his reasons, he did not want those writings to see the light of day.

Somerset Maugham in his novel, The Moon and Sixpence, portrays the life the French painter Gauguin who went to Tahiti in search of a new culture and environment. There he painted the life and culture of these people. According to the story, he painted on the walls of his hut where he was living. When he finished his work, he asked one of his friends to destroy them. When his friend saw the painting, he was stunned. They were unique and remarkable. He inquired the artist about why he wanted to burn these painting. Gauguin replied that after completing these paintings, he had fulfilled his ambitions and expressed his creativity. This gave him satisfaction and a sense of achievement. Therefore, he was not interested to keep them. To him, they had lost their significance and he wanted no more out of them.

There is a lesson to our writers who scheme and manipulate to become popular and famous without producing writings of any value. Soon, they are consigned to the dustbin of history. Time recognises only those who have originality in their ideas. Only writings that contain such ideas survive and keep the names of their authors alive. Even those who burnt their manuscripts and destroyed their work are remembered for their honesty and integrity.

The concept of power

Generally, whenever we talk about power, we think in term of physical and military power. However, there are many shades of power which have different sources in its making. History leads us to understand not only the phenomenon of power but also its dynamic. When the Turks and the Mughals arrived in India they were nothing but armed bands which defeated their opponents and occupied the conquered land. Both the Turks and the Mughals acquired political power as a result of using the resources of the land situated between Ganges and Yamuna rivers. Land revenue was the basic source of their power which led them to lay down the foundations of an empire.The Mughal rule became more powerful and stronger as it occupied more land and increased its income from the revenue. It declined when its rule was challenged by its provincial princes. It lost land and its income. Finally, the Mughal emperors ended up as paupers. When political power was disintegrated, the gap was filled by the English who usurped the same resources and inherited the power in India to become its rulers.In the 17th century, Spain emerged as a great imperial power in Europe. The sources of its power were silver and gold from the mines of its South American colonies. Spain invested this money to expand its power in Europe. It was the time when it sent the most powerful armada to conquer England. It declined as it wastefully used these resources in wars. When these sources dried up, Spain was reduced to a weaker nation.England did not have enough land revenue to make it a great power. Therefore, it relied on foreign trade and commerce and the plundering of silver and golden loaded

ships of Spain coming from South America to Europe. It was not a permanent source to make it a powerful nation. It derived its power in the 18th century as a result of the Industrial Revolution which inaugurated the era of colonialism and transformed it into a world power.Scientific and technological inventions beamed new sources of power. This created a conflict among Furopean nations for political hegemony in the world. There was race among these powers to make advancement in science and technology. Their universities became centre for research and invention. Academic institutions and societies were set up to encourage research. Research journals published contributions of scholars. Industries flourished on the basis of new research. Factories started to produce goods on large scale for the world markets. It was the rise of European imperialism.Today, knowledge has become the base for power. Those nations who are producing knowledge are becoming powerful. The United States is the example of this phenomenon. Its universities and research institutes are producing knowledge which distinguishes it from other nations.However, problem of power is that is blinds those who hold it. Those nations, who are conscious of their power, become arrogant and look down to those who are weak. Thus, power leads to ambition to subordinate the other nations, humiliate and insult them and exploit their resources. Powerful nations start to believe that they are civilised. democratic and protector of human rights. They justify their wars, massacre and pillage of the countries of the weak. History is full of such events. In the ancient Greek, the Athenians attacked the small island Milos and asked its government to submit. The argument of the Athenian generals was that as they were powerful and Milos was weak, it had to surrender. On its refusal, the island was occupied and whole male population was killed and women and children were sold as slaves.That is the price which the weak pays to the powerful.European

colonialism was based on the concept of 'survival of the fittest' which interpreted that powerful had a right to crush, subdue and eliminate weaker nations because it was the law of nature.Kutilya in Arthashastra and Machiavelli in Prince by liberating power from morality turned it into a tool to oppress and exploit the weaker nations. Throughout history, power shifts from one nation to another. There was a time when the Romans ruled over vast empire by killing and enslaving vanquished nations and usurping their natural resources. The Arabs were the next who conquered their neighboring countries. They were replaced by the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mughals. All imperial powers in the end declined as a result of resistance.A new phenomenon of power emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries. That was the power of ideology which inspired nations to fight against imperial power and change the political map of the world. Nationalism and socialism were the two important ideologies which caused changes in the present century. Recently, we have witnessed "people's power" which brought changes in the Eastern Europe. The Arab world is experiencing it too nowadays. Though the state power is trying to subdue people's power, but it seems to have failed. Unarmed people have such a power that the state fails to crush it. This is the power that could change the world and liberate common people from oppression and tyranny.

Taking down barriers

Twenty-one years after the fall of the Berlin wall, when the earliest sensation and the immediate aftermath is over, historians are in a position to assess and analyse the event and its impact on different parts of the world. I shall try to look at the significance of the sevent from a South Asian angle. The first impression was that the fall of the wall united divided Germany by peaceful means. The Wall divided both Germanys on the basis of ideology. In other examples, such as Vietnam, the unification was completed after bloody wars. The two Koreas are still divided. Therefore, a peaceful unification was the most significant aspect of it.

In the case of India and Pakistan, people remember the Partition of the subcontinent and communal riots in which thousands of people died on both sides. The most painful aspect was the plight of the families who were separated as a result of the bloody affair. Though the Partition did not construct a concrete wall but there is an ideological wall between India and Pakistan which has become a great obstacle to having friendly and close relations. The fall of the Berlin wall not only united both Germanys but also ended the question of divided families.

Just after the partition, there were no restrictions for people to visit either India or Pakistan. Neither passport nor visa was required to cross the border. One could stay as long as one wanted. I remember that Indian newspapers, magazines and books were easily available in Pakistan. Indian movies were popular and screened at all cinemas. There were regular music concerts and gatherings of poets

on both sides. Everything changed in 1965 as a result of the war. There was complete boycott of all kinds of relationship. No one was allowed to visit each others country. .Divided families lost all contact. An invisible wall was erected to separate the citizens of both countries.

Keeping this in mind, people asked two questions: Is it possible to end partition and unite the two countries? If not, are there other alternatives to bring the people of these two hostile nations closer? Of course, there are some people, though in minority, who believe that the Partition was unjust and it should be reversed. However, the idea is not popular. Moreover, after 62 years both countries drifted away from each other. Differences became more pronounced and the possibility to unite appears impossible. Therefore, intellectuals, social activists, and political workers adopted another alternative to bring the two countries closer: by mobilising people on the basis of cultural and social affinity and create an atmosphere of harmony and peace. This project was undertaken by a Forum known as People to Peoples Dialogue. In 1991, for the first time, 100 Pakistani writers, artists, musicians, singers, and social and political workers visited India on a peace mission. I have personal experience of the visit. It was sensational because for the first time such efforts were taken by the people. The Indian counterpart welcomed the mission and it was widely publicised in the media.

It had a great impact in every aspect of life. Gulzar, the famous filmmaker, screened a moving film on the effects of Partition. Allok Bhallah translated Urdu short stories written on Partition to English. Poets of both sides remembered the pre-partition days of communal harmony. When the Indian peace mission visited Pakistan, it was welcomed and many resolutions were passed to advocate easing visa system and allowing intellectuals to contact each other freely .The peace activities continued throughout the 90s.The result was that the establishment of both

countries was compelled to grant visas generously and allow people to visit and meet each other. These activities reached the peak when the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpaee visited Pakistan by bus and expressed his desire to have good and friendly relations with Pakistan. Sadly, at this point occurred the Kargil episode and it ended all the efforts for peace. Both countries reverted back to the same vicious circle.

Besides this. there is also a political impact of the fall of the Berlin wall if not directly but indirectly. The right-wing political parties interpreted it as the failure of communism and a sigh of freedom from a repressive system. Those who adhered to a leftist ideology were demoralized and depressed. The result was that both in Pakistan as well as in India religious extremism emerged with full force and vitality. In India, BJP won popular elections and formed the government. In Pakistan, the democratic system was short-lived but both the governments of Benazir and Nawaz Sharif maintained the Islamisation of Ziaul Haq despite their short tenures. Nawaz Sharif declared himself as the heir of Zia and promised to complete his mission. He added the death penalty to the blasphemy law and 10 years rigorous punishment to those who violate the so-called Pakistan Ideology.

The retreat of the Russian forces from Afghanistan and the rule of Taliban strengthened religious extremism in Pakistan. It was propagated that after the failure of communism, the only alternative is an Islamic system. These religious extremist groups flourished in democratic governments as well as military dictatorships. These groups were anti-West and wanted to purify Pakistani culture from pollution. Leftist parties and groups became so weak as a result of successive restrictions that they could not challenge the growing wave of extremism which tightly

gripped society. What is going on at present is the result of a global political change after the fall of the Berlin wall.

Another result of the collapse of Soviet Union was the increasing influence of USA in this region. The economic policy of India changed the Nehruvian vision and the emerging bourgeoisie was more interested to have close relations with USA rather than keep old contact with Russia. In Pakistan, the political situation of Afghanistan and threat of Al-Qaida and Taliban allowed American to interfare. Pakistan aligned as an ally to America to fight the war against terrorism.

Talking heads

No style or substance: just high drama

I remember the old days when there was only one TV channel which telecast not only news but dramas, films, documentaries, musical shows and literary programmes. In the beginning, the arrival of private channels was exciting. We all hoped that there would be competition and we could watch a variety of programmes. These hopes were soon dashed to ground. These channels offer something new what is now popularly known as the talk show.

Every TV channel is faithfully following the same cookie cutter pattern of the talk show without any change or innovation, generally, on the same topic and with the same persons. It has become a routine matter that two groups of experts, having opposite point of views, are invited to face each other and provide entertainment to the viewers. It has replaced the drama series of the PTV of yore. There are the same few experts who keenly take part in every discussion on different channels. They are politicians, journalists, and occasionally representatives from different public sectors.

In most cases, the anchor person tries to show his own expertise and speaks most of the time. Instead of asking questions he expresses his own views, and sometimes forces the experts to follow his line of arguments. He allows each person to present his point of view within one minute and moves to another person and then to the third person. The result is that nobody gets time to finish their argument.

There are some professional experts who are on every channel and speak on every topic with confidence. As they have acquired experience of how to impress viewers and how to demoralise their adversaries, they shout loudly. If the other side is not capable of shouting in response, it means they win the contest. Recently, I watched a programme on Pakistani textbooks. There were 3 persons on one side and 3 were facing them to respond to their shouting. The topic was to analyse Pakistani textbooks.

On the one side were three academicians who were speaking softly to express their point of view. On the other side were professional experts of TV talk shows. They shouted with full force and knocked down the other party. Instead of discussing Pakistani textbooks, their argument was that the American textbooks avoid telling the truth to their students and do not mention their aggression in Vietnam. His companion pointed out that British textbooks do not inform their students about their imperialism. The gist of the argument then turns out to be that if Americans and Europeans are not telling the truth, then why should we?

Recently, I watched a programme which was being conducted on history. I was curious to know the views of the participants. The discipline of history is changing rapidly and there are fresh perspectives cropping up to facilitate greater understanding. I was happy that this topic was chosen instead of a hackneyed one. A professor of history was there whose knowledge of history and performance shocked me. A prominent literary figure also joinded and expressed his views on history.

Regarding Mahmud of Ghaznavi, he referred to Edward Gibbons Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The expert stated that he invaded India along with 200 elephants crossing the Hindukush. So, it was claimed that Mahmud superseded Hannibal who crossed the Alps with

elephants. I was shocked by the ignorance of the so-called expert. My God, first of all, there are no elephants in Afghanistan or Central Asia. Moreover, the route of his ivasion was the Khyber Pass.

I doubt that Gibbon made such a blunder. Nonetheless, one should apply ones knowledge and common sense before accepting such things. Even the professor present on the show did not correct him and kept his silence. It is sad that our history which was already being distorted by our textbooks is now being further obliterated by these TV channels.

Some talk shows, in the hope of making the show more colourful and entertaining, have introduced a new trend of inviting the audience for an open Q-and-A session. It provides a good opportunity to those who are good speakers and shout aggressively to get applause from the audience. I was on the panel in some of discussions and miserably failed to convince the audience of my point of view and the audience was unreceptive of reasoned logic. Sentimental dialogue, emotional rhetoric, and reiterating of popular views are liked by the viewers and audience in most cases.

These talk shows, instead of providing knowledge or creating awareness and consciousness, entertain the viewers by inciting the panelists to exchange unparliamentarily dialogues and insult each other. Such a show is regarded very successful and gets high ratings. However, repeatedly showing the same programme with the same people has become boring and uninteresting. As there is no creativity among TV anchor person, they are resorting to other easier alternatives to make their shows interesting.

These talk shows have reduced the academic standards of dialogue to nothing and have converted discussions into nothing but a tamasha. To make it appealing, they sensationalise issues instead of

substantively discussing them. Not only do political scandals provide enough material but politicians are also ever-ready to take part in this, especially in order to either justify their party stance or to oppose their adversaries. Such hollow discussions are changing the mindset of society.

There is no soberness in our daily discussions; rather they are animated by emotion and emotional concerns. Reasoning requires knowledge and emotional appeals are the best way to hide a lack of knowledge. These talk shows truly represent our intellectual hollowness and bankruptcy.

Oppressed no more

Learning is an arduous and difficult but thrilling and fascinating process. That's why individuals and nations are reluctant to learn something new. If someone wants to learn, he has to change his mindset and be ready to recognize those traditions and values which are contrary to his beliefs. It is the lesson of history that learning not only opens new venues of knowledge but also helps one explore a hidden and unknown world and eliminates outdated and obsolete ideas. It inspires one to go in search of new thinking which could lead to one moving in a progressive direction.

As far as learning from the past is concerned, there are two alternatives: to learn from the mistakes and avoid them; or to follow the same path and make an attempt to act without any change. Our experience shows that the idea of learning in order to avoid the same mistakes is not wholly correct. Although history is fully documented, there are few nations who make an attempt to learn from past experience. The best example is the Jews, who, as a community, are highly educated and have deep historical consciousness but since they assumed power and founded the state of Israel, it appears that they are not interested in learning from the past in order to deal with the Palestinians.

There is no doubt that the Jews suffered extremely and in spite of their ordeal and tribulations, they survived with tenacity and determination. If we look to their history, it is peppered with upheavals. From the Exodus and settlement in the land of Palestine, and foundation of their own state with David and Solomon, to an invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. who demolished their temple

and forced them to leave Jerusalem; their community has never had its shortage of problems. They, as a community, spent years in Babylonian captivity and maintained their religious identity by compiling the Torah. When Cyrus, the Persian king, conquered Mesopotamia in 576 B.C., he allowed them to return to the homeland. However, they could not live in peace. The emergence of the Romans and the expansion of their empire made them a target. The city of Jerusalem was burnt and they were again expelled. When some of their groups resisted, they were brutally crushed.

The Arabs were one of the heirs of the Roman Empire. The Jews found peace and security under their rule. They were appointed on important posts without any religious discrimination. When the Moors conquered Spain, they followed them to North Africa and helped them in establishing their hold over the conquered country. During the Moorish rule, the Jews were their partner and contributed in producing a rich culture which was based on tolerance and religious harmony. One of their great philosophers, Maimonides (d.1204) who is known in the Jewish community as the second Moses, was from Spain. Later on he migrated to Egypt and served Salahuddin Ayyubi as a physician. It was the golden period of Jewish history when, along with the Arabs, they created a wonderful and magnificent culture.

In 1492, the Reconquista ended the golden period and the Christian rulers asked both the Muslims and the Jews either to become Christian or leave the country. This time, the Jews were given refuge by the Ottoman Empire. From then onwards, they wandered from one country to another. They were invited to Europe by the rulers. As money-lending was prohibited in Christianity, the Jews war asked to conduct this business which was not popular among the people. Those who paid high interest did not like it; therefore, it created hostility against them.

Moreover, when they got success and became a prosperous community, they were hated by the poor and deprived sections of society. As a result, they experienced expulsion from England, France, Germany and other countries. Then, they migrated to Eastern Europe. In Poland, soon they earned a reputation as skillful businessmen. However, the Polish elite and common people, after taking loans on interest, did not want to pay back the amount. They exploited the situation which subsequently led to their massacre and expulsion. In Germany, their settlements were separated by walls which were known as Ghettos. They were treated as outcasts with contempt and disdain.

The emergence of capitalism in Europe changed the fate of the Jews. As they were experts in banking and skilful financiers, they proved an asset to the system. The expansion and strengthening of democratic institutions and secularization of the European mind led to the elimination of prejudices against them while major intellectual and scientific contributions to the western civilization placed them on high status. When the Zionist movement planned to have a separate homeland for the Jew, the First World War provided this opportunity. The Jewish scientists promised to help the Allies in exchange for providing them with a homeland. They were offered to have Mauritius Island or Uganda. They insisted on the land of Palestine. Finally, the Balfour Declaration in 1914 promised to accept their demand. The imperial power of Britain handed over Palestine as it was a land without people.

Once the Jews got a homeland and assumed power, their character changed from the oppressed to the oppressor and from the exploited to the exploiter. They started to repeat all those tactics of suppression which they themselves had experienced in the past. They created havoc amongst the Palestinians in order to evacuate them from their homeland. They systematically massacred them, hunted them and forced them to flee. To settle the Jews,

they made Palestinians refugees and made them homeless. They tortured those who resisted against them and target killing was their chosen method to eliminate their opponents. Thousands of freedom fighters, branded as terrorists, are in their prisons. They have erected walls around Palestinian cities and separated them like ghettoes.

They are using the history of their ordeal to hide their crimes and to silence the voices against their violation of human rights, occupation of the Palestinian land, target killing, and the building of illegal settlements on occupied land.

It shows how power changes the character of a nation and how it alters its outlook, historical perspective and historical experience. Instead of learning a lesson, the Israeli Jews are making a new history which is full of brutality and barbarity. Now, it is a lesson for the Palestinians to learn from the Jewish history and continue to struggle for their homeland.

The law through history

A recent report in the newspaper related that a member of the Punjab Assembly had violated the law by breaking traffic rules. When he was stopped by the traffic warden to point out his offence, he became furious and told the warden to ignore his offence since he was an MPA. In another reported incident, when the warden stopped a car which had tinted glasses, instead of being paid heed to, the warden was warned to care of his job. This car belonged to a general of the army. There is a popular story that is told that someone asked a clerk about rules and regulations regarding some case and the clerks telling response was, Show me the man, I will show the rules.

In a feudal and bureaucratic society, the law is for the common man while the powerful and privileged are above the law. It is their privilege not to just disobey the law but to defy it to show their power and privilege. It is interesting that in the olden times, rulers as well as people were very much concerned about law. In their opinion, the law was necessary to discipline society. Ancient lawmakers are famous for producing laws which could prevent crimes and maintain peace and order in the society. We know about Draco (620 BC) who for the first time introduced written laws which were drastic enough to control people committing any crime against society. We still refer to laws as Draconian whenever they are severe and want to condemn the nature of these laws.

Another famous lawmaker was Solen (638 B.C.) whose laws were engraved on stone and put in the market place where people could read them. The market place also had the building where the legal cases were decided. A

separate building housed the legal archives where judgments of the past were preserved and were quoted as precedents from time to time. Such was the consciousness of law that every Athenian used it to protect his rights.

Sophocles (497 B.C.), the dramatist, wrote a drama known as Antigone. The story goes that the brother of Antigone was killed fighting against the king .He forbade the burial of the body her brother as punishment. She violated the order of the king and buried the dead body. When she was tried on the violation of kings order, she boldly told him that it was man-made law which she violated and by burying the dead body, she had observed natural law. If the man-made law was based on injustice, it could be defied. The theme of this drama centered around law and its manifestation in society which demonstrates the sensitivity of the ancient Greeks to legal matters and issues.

The ancient Greeks gave much emphasis to the observance of laws. According to them, it kept the community together, maintained moral values and checked unlimited liberty. The Roman followed this concept and during the time of the republic, the laws were engraved on tablets and were out in the public square where the public could read them. In the 6th century, Justinian introduced his own system of law which was suited to an empire. The Roman legal system was so comprehensive that Europe inherited it and used it in the medieval period. The concept of Rule of Law derives both from the Greeks and the Romans.

In the East, Hamurabi (750 B.C.), emerged as the famous law-giver who claimed that his laws were divine. They were based on the principle of eye for eye and a tooth for tooth. In the East, all laws drew their legitimacy from divine power. As such, they could not be changed. This strengthened the political and religious authorities In spite of political and social changes, the legal system remained unchanged.

On the other hand, in Western societies, as the laws were man-made, they were more open to change and laws were continuously changed according to the need of time. After the French revolution, Napoleon introduced the code of Napoleon which radically changed the legal system of Europe. In the 18th century, the Utilitarians emphasised the importance of the rule of law. Hence, Western legal systems have a history of being subject to change and timely evolution.

In modern history, the black Americans resisted discriminative laws and forced the lawmakers to change them. A similar thing happened in South Africa, where a movement was launched against the apartheid laws and that particular struggle ended triumphantly. The legal system of any society reflects its social structure. The ruling and elite classes make attempts to formulate laws which could protect their privileges. Therefore, if the laws are based on discrimination, people have the right to protest against them and force the authorities to change them. In Pakistan, we still have a number of laws which were made during the colonial period in order to defend the interests of the colonisers.

As these laws are still protecting our ruling classes, they have been kept intact rather than being subjected to reform. People observe the law only when they uphold equitable principles; if not, they are justified in challenging them.

A society fragmented

Where some are more equal than others

Whenever class differences increase in a society, they result in social and political disintegration which the lead to fraying of the social fabric. In the past, many societies have faced such a crisis when class conflict became a threat for the existence of a society. Those societies that took some steps to minimise or end this conflict were saved from chaos and disorder but those that failed to resolve the situation faced delegation which led to extinction.

To elaborate, we can take the example of ancient Greece. Solon, the famed Athenian lawmaker, found society facing a class conflict which disturbed peace and order. The aristocracy, intoxicated by its wealth, power, and privileges treated the lower classes contemptuously. If a peasant failed to pay the loan of a landlord, he seized his land and enslaved him and his family. In some cases, they were sold as slaves in the markets. As slaves, they could be shifted to other countries. It resulted in the break up of families and extreme misery for the common people. The result of this policy was that there was anger and bitterness among peasants and common people against the aristocracy which disrupted social harmony and peace of the society. Solon, realising the consequences of the policy, introduced important laws to resolve it. First, he prohibited the enslavement and subsequent sale of Athenian citizens. Secondly, he restored much of the seized land to peasants. These two important laws changed the structure of society in definitive ways. They, on one hand, established the principle of freedom, and on the other hand, provided

security to the impoverished peasants. Although aristocrats protested about losing their power and privilege but he resisted their pressure determinately and successfully implemented these laws.

Moreover, he ordained by law that every citizen of Athens was to be a member of a general assembly which would take decisions regarding important political and social matters. This empowered the common people. They acquired a respectable and dignified place in the society. The result of this policy was that every Athenian citizen was ready to defend his country at the time of crisis because they were not just defending merely a city but were also protecting their own rights and status. When the Persians invaded Greece with a strong army, these Athenians fought against them and defeated them in the battlefields. Their nationalism emerged from below and not from above. There was no professional army but every citizen was obliged to serve in the army at the time of invasion.

This is lesson of history, that if people are treated well and on the basis of equality, they are ready to defend their country from internal and external threats. If they are abandoned by the ruling classes and contemptuously treated, they have no interest in protecting the properties and privileges of the aristocracy.

When we study and analyse the history of Pakistan, we find that since 1947, the gap between rich and poor has been increasing. In the early period, there was a time when people from different classes used to live in the same mohalla or locality, their children used to study in the same government schools, colleges and universities, they used to go the same government hospitals for treatment etc. However, gradually, the situation has changed drastically. A rich class emerged that accumulated wealth by illegal means. They are corrupt bureaucrats, businessmen, smugglers, and army officials who, by violating the legal

framework of the society, distinguish themselves as the privileged class. They have separated themselves from the common people by being ensconced in their cordoned off separate residential areas, and by establishing their own schools, colleges, and universities. Those who are super rich go abroad for treatment, education, and entertainment. In the rural areas, peasants are at the mercy of their landlords who are free to keep them in private jails or punish them for any 'disobedience' by violating all laws. The Hindu peasant tribes such as Bhil, Koli, and Megawar are treated as outcasts. In an age of democracy, they have no rights and are marginalised as communities. Same is the case in other parts of the country where gypsies and wandering tribes are not included in the mainstream and live on the fringes of society.

In the case of religious minorities, political and social rights are denied to them. They are treated as secondary citizens. They are discriminated against and are not eligible to be appointed to high posts.

In such a fragmented society, appeal for unity looks like a joke. The only weapon which is used by the ruling classes is to appeal to nationalist emotions. National songs are broadcasted by television and radio channels to create national sentiments among people. This is nationalism from above, not from below. That's why, it is hollow in its appeal. People are approached to sacrifice for the country without realising that how could the illiterate, sick and downgraded wretched of the earth, who have no energy, no power, and no consciousness come forward to rescue the ruling classes in the time of crisis.

The rich and powerful classes have alienated the common people. They have abandoned them to their fate and left them in a state of poverty and misery. History tells us that in such a situation, rich and privilege classes lose all sympathies of the people. Their only interest is how to survive in an economic crisis, how to save their

lives from epidemics and pestilence. Why should they sacrifice to save and protect indifferent rulers and their wealth?

As class differences are increasing in our society, people are becoming more embittered by each passing day. Finding no alternative, these people either resort to crimes or take refuge in extremism and fundamentalism. We can't allow this crisis of inegalitarianism to play havoc with our societal structure.

The third wave

Ground-up instead of top-down

The Arab world is politically in turmoil. The massive demonstrations in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordon and Palestine have surprised not only the world but also the dictators and autocrats ruling there. After enduring decades of repression and exploitations, people showed their anger and power. The question is that what ideology is playing behind this: religious fundamentalism or nationalism?

To trace the history of the Arab nationalism, we have to analyse the events of the First World War. It was the time when the entire Middle East and North Africa were under the Ottoman Caliphate. When the Ottomans joined the World War against the Allied forces, the British made attempts to create a movement of Arab nationalism against the Ottomans. Lawrence of Arabia played an important role to create the nationalist sentiments and organised revolts against the Ottomans. The defeat of the Ottomans in the war decided the fate of the Middle East.

Britain and France, on the basis of the secret pact, reshaped the map of the Middle East. The Saudis were supported to capture Hijaz and Najad, which they named Saudi Arabia. The Hashmid family was awarded the kingship of Iraq and Jordan. Syria and Lebanon were given to France under the mandatory system. Balfour, the foreign minister of Britain, announced support to the establishment of the state of Israel. The Arab leaders were powerless to challenge this new order. The nationalism which was sponsored by the British agent failed to create any sense of

dignity and honour amongst them. They surrendered to the Western powers without any protest. The first wave of nationalism liberated them from the Ottomans but enslaved them to Western imperialism.

This political system remained intact up to the 1950s when the second wave of the Arab nationalism appeared among the young military officers who wanted to change the system and to get rid of the kings who were ruling as despots and playing as puppets in the hands of Western imperialism. The result was that in Egypt, young army officers under Gamal Abdel Nasser led the military coup in 1956 and expelled King Farouq. The coup was widely welcomed by the people who saw a bright future in the change. It was followed by another army officer Karim Qasim in Iraq, who in 1958 overthrew the kingship in Iraq. The people of Iraq enthusiastically supported him and showed the anger by dragging the dead body of Nuri-al-Said, the prime minister, in the streets of Baghdad. In 1969, Col. Qaddafi following the foot steps of Nasser ended the monarchy in Libya.

In the second wave of nationalism, the Arab intellectuals fully contributed to make it strong and effective. The Baith party in Iraq and Syria presented a radical philosophy to restructure the Arab world. Al-Husri, a Syrian intellectual, launched a campaign to unite the Arab world on the basis of linguistic nationalism which was secular in character. The Christian writers of the Arab world also contributed to make the Arabic language rich and resourceful in order to bind the Arab people in a single unit beyond borders.

The second wave of the Arab nationalism was from the above and not from the below. It was first initiated by the young army officials who had a vision to change the destiny of the Arab world. They were supported by the intellectuals to stimulate the sentiments of nationalism who also provided an ideological base for it. However, the

second wave also failed to rebuild the Middle East as per the wishes of its leaders. After the Arab-Israel war of 1967, the final nail in the coffin of this wave of nationalism was the death of Nasser. The Baith party in Iraq and Syria were converted into dictatorships. The same pattern was followed in other Arab countries. The region was then ostensibly ruled either by monarchs or dictators but they were under the grip of American imperialism.

The recent wave of Arab nationalism is different because it has emerged from the ground and is bottoms up as opposed to top-down (as was the case in the second wave). The people have initiated and sustained it. It appears that people have failed to achieve their motives to change the basic structure of political system as the Arab states are not ready to admit the demands of common people. However, for the first time, the people have realised that they have power and they can fight against the state. People have also realised that the dictators and monarchs are not in their favour and they will not hesitate from massacring their own people to save their rule.

So far, those who had ruled in the name of revolution have been exposed. There is no doubt that the third wave of Arab nationalism is a turning point in the history of Middle East. It has always happened in history, that on the eve of change, rulers have tried to placate the inflame demotions of people by announcing some kind of reforms. The same thing is being witnessed in the Middle East: Qaddafi in Libya and the King in Saudi Arabia have both declared to provide financial assistance to their people. However, the protests are still going on in Yemen and Bahrain unabated. It is hoped that the third wave of Arab nationalism will bring a change in the near future, not radically but constitutionally to weaken the powers that rule the Arab world right now.

To be a writer

Suffering for their craft

This is the age of professionalism. We have professional doctors, engineers, technicians, and scientists etc. In advanced and developed countries, there are professional writers who devote their whole time to creative writing. In 16th century Europe, when the printing press has just been introduced and books started to publish, there emerged a class of professional writers who survived on the income of their writing. The famous humanist intellectual Erasmus from Holland earned his livelihood through his writings. His books were not cheap or scandalous but on serious topics and printed in thousands to fulfill the demands of people. Thus, the tradition of professional writing has long been established in Europe and America.

The professional writer in the West can earn a comfortable livelihood through writing. For instance, When Will Durant's book Story of Philosophy became a bestseller, he decided to leave the profession of teaching and become a full-time writer. He and his wife spent their time writing and subsequently produced 11 volumes of The Story of Civilisation. They lived comfortable lives on the basis of royalties from their books. When Oswald Spengler wanted to write his classical book Decline of the West, he also resigned from his post as a school teacher and, after thorough research, produced the book which soon became the most hotly discussed book in the academic circles of Europe.

A professional writer can devote all of his time to reading and writing. To him, it is his job. If he earns his

living through some other profession, the only consequence is that he will have less time for writing due to which the quality of his research and written work will suffer. For a part time researcher, it becomes difficult to have access to all sources and to devote the time required to a time-intensive pursuit.

A writer must make a personal commitment to writing. His consideration is either to satisfy his intellectual trust or to create awareness in society; in either case, he sacrifices his leisure time for the sake of the written word. In Pakistan, it is not possible to become a professional writer and depend on the earning from writing. A writer in Pakistan is also invariably a professional doctor or chartered accountant or a social science scholar. Most of the time, he is known by his other professional identity and not as a writer. If some individual dares to become a professional writer, he suffers not only financially but is humiliated by every section of society as a useless person who has entered a useless non-profession. Moreover, the relationship between writer and publisher are not cordial in the local context. Publishers are not in the habit of paying royalties. A famous publisher has a novel method of payment: on sell of books: if 10 books are sold in a month, the author would get the royalty of 10 books. And such novel payment arrangements aren't the end of the story. It is common for publisher to ask the writer to pay the cost of his book. It has become a common practice to do so especially from writer living abroad. So much so, that some publishers are thriving on this practice. Even if the writer decided to avoid these difficulties by publishing their own book, more difficulties await them. Once the book has been published, in the second stage, the writer inevitably needs a distributor or bookseller. Up till the 1980s, the commission rate for booksellers was 33%; it is now 50%. Even with the low cut, the recovery of the amount is often impossible. I remember the case of my teacher Dr Ahmad Bashir. He

published his thesis on Akbar. In dealing with booksellers, he wanted to be paid in cash while the bookseller refused to deal with him unless it was on credit. Due to this disagreement, his work remained unpublished. His work was recently published by an Indian publisher and termed by many historians as a significant contribution to the study of Mughal history. This wasn't the end of his travails at the hands of the book business. On the request of a publisher, he started to write the history of the Mughal dynasty. When the first volume on Babur was published, the publisher refused to recognise that all rights were reserved by him as the author. As a protest, he refused to write further volumes. This was a serious loss to the Mughal historiography. There are many examples where serious researchers, after spending many years on writing a book, have failed to find a publisher. A professional writer is neither respected by society nor by the publisher. It is wrong to assume that people do not read; people still buy and appreciate well-written books. The irony is that the writers remain poor and miserable while the publisher becomes richer and richer. They play many tricks to exploit writers. The print line may say 500 but the actual print run could be in excess of 1000. Publishers even reprint second or third editions without changing the first print line. For a writer, it is impossible to check these frauds.

I think, apart from other reasons, these attitudes play an important role in our intellectual poverty. Unless intellectual activity is properly rewarded, there will be no incentive to pursue it. Not only economic reward, these writers deserve respect for the time and effort they put into a pursuit that benefits many.

What is revolution?

......and how it impacted human life

As our political, social and economic situation is deteriorating and, as a result of it, common people are facing hardships in life, there is an urge to change the system in order to get rid of corruption and disorder. The idea to change by introducing reforms appeals no body. At this stage people talk of revolution. It is in the collective memory of people that how in history revolutions radically changed societies by eradicating old system and replacing it with a progressive one. The French, the Russian, and the Chinese revolutions become models to them. However, as Marx remarks in Eighteen Brumaire that man makes his own history but not according to his wishes, therefore, before thinking about revolution, we have to understand its meaning and concept historically.

The original meaning of revolution is to revolve in a circle. In ancient Greece, their political system revolved around kingship, oligarchy, and democracy. In this concept there is no change in basic structure. This suited the ruling classes who did not want any change in the system in order to retain their status intact. Rebellion in the medieval period was the mode to challenge existing government against the measures which were harmful or damaging to certain sections of society such as peasants, slaves or aristocracy. Members of royal family rebelled to claim the right of succession. Rebellions, generally did not want any basic change of social structure but to replace the government which could accept their demands.

In case of the Muslims, the medieval jurist Al Mawardi, in his book Al Ahkam al Sultaniya advised people to recognise usurpers and not to raise any voice against them. However, in spite of these legal bindings, rebellions occurred throughout history as a solution of problems. Resistance movements, on the other hand, made attempts at forcing government to alleviate their grievances such as the Diggers, and the Levelers in 17th centurys England pressed the government to grant them right of vote and to abolish the House of Lords, which was the seat of aristocracy. In India, during the colonial period, Moplas of South India, resisted against the taxes and demanded to abolish them.

The third mode of challenging the existing system was a war of independence. It was an armed struggle against the colonial powers who occupied a country. In 1857, the Indians fought against the English in an attempt to expel them from India. The Americans successfully struggled against the British and won their independence. Thomas Pen, the author of Common Sense who participated in this war and whose book inspired common people to fight for liberty, called it revolution. Since then, instead of war of independence, it became a revolution.

The revolution acquired a new meaning after the French Revolution in 1789. It changed not only political structure but replaced the social and cultural values and customs. The changes occurred as a result of violence. The revolutionary forces eliminated those elements which were obstacles to implement the new system. The same process was followed in the Russian and the Chinese Revolutions. As the concept of revolution is to change a society, historians point out two processes on the basis of historical evidence.

Firstly, when a society changes gradually and, secondly, when it turns upside down within a short span of time.Keeping this in view, historians argue that there was a

Scientific Revolution which brought slow but solid changes in the outlook of people. Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein changed the views about nature and the world. The invention of printing press widely disseminated knowledge which equipped people to understand their environment rationally. It was a victory of rationalism, over dogma.

Toynbee, a historian of the 18th century, called to the process of industrialisation a revolution because as a result of it, society shifted from feudalism to industry. It inaugurated a culture which was antithetical to feudalism. In most of the Asian and African countries, after the independence from colonialism there were no revolutions on the model of the French, the Russian and the Chinese.

On the contrary, there were military coupe detat. It is also known as Bonapartis, because Napoleon Bonaparte captured power in 1799 by overthrowing government with the help of army. He occupied the assembly hall and made legislators hostage and proclaimed himself as the First Consul, the supreme political authority, following the Roman tradition. Afterward, the pattern has changed. A military general declares to overthrow the government and the army occupies TV and radio stations. President and Prime Minister Houses are captured and they are imprisoned. After declaring emergency, all political parties are banned.

Trade unions and students bodies declared illegal. Media is advised to carry only censored news. To legitimise the coup, the past government is accused of corruption and mishandling the state affairs. When Ayub Khan imposed martial law, he called it a revolution. But, in fact, instead of a change, his rule destroyed the democratic institutions and traditions which consequently plunged the country into disorder. In a global world where capitalism is dominating, it is difficult for a single country to bring a revolution and survive.

Immediately. it is besieged by the capitalist powers and sanctions are imposed to strangulate it. This happened in the case of Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Cuba is a hard nut to crack and survives in spite of all sanctions. Therefore, it is argued that to compete with global capitalism, there should be global revolution. For such an event, we have to wait.

Eurocentricites and more

Debunking the miracle of Europe

Those historians who hold a Eurocentric view of history regard the rise of Europe as a result of its own internal resources without any external influence. They term it the miracle of Europe. A miracle which occurred as a result of its people who have extraordinary talent and energy compared to other nations. David Landes, the author of Wealth and Poverty of Nations, is one of the exponents of the Eurocentric point of view of history. Analysing the rise of Europe, he argues that first of all, its climate favoured it to make its development. In countries with warm or hot climates, insects and germs multiply and create diseases and pestilence which destroy the human as well as animal population. In contrast, the climate of Europe is too cold and the bacteria and germs remain buried under ice causing no harm. According to the author, when the plague came from the east and spread throughout Europe, they made attempts to find its cure rather than just to suffer silently. This approach made them capable of control diseases.

Another difference between the East and the West was that in the Eastern countries, the state controlled water resources. As a result of this, peasants and landlords relied on the power of the state. It created the oriental despotism in which rulers became very powerful and managed the distribution of water with help of bureaucracy. In the West, there was abundant water and it was not under state-control. It made the landlords and the peasants independent. Thats why constant conflict between feudal lords and kings was witnessed. Moreover, as there was enough food for its

animals, they were healthy, powerful and more productive. Another characteristic was that by marrying late, they controlled population. In the East, where there was a huge explosion of population, rulers forced them to build huge monuments like pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China.

According to Landes, the institution of private property played an important role in the rise of Europe. On the basis of the law of primogeniture, property was inherited by the eldest son. It kept the property intact and a permanent class of nobility remained in power. The other children had to work for living. Some historians point out that the second generation was responsible for exploring new venues to create their own property independently. They were the people who were involved in search of new trade routes and to conquer new colonies.

After the decline of Roman Empire, cities were abandoned. The nobility, finding cities unsafe, retired to countryside. It greatly damaged trade and commerce. Moreover, the development of culture ceased. In the 14th century, rulers again turned their attention to laying down the foundation of cities that revived trade and commerce and gave a respectable status to the trading classes.

In 1011, Europe was involved in the Crusades against the Muslims to take hold of the holy places situated in Palestine. Though it created religious frenzy, it also led to the Italian state investing capital in these wars to get the trade routes to the Middle East. The Europeans learnt a lot from this experience. They brought back to Europe the art of paper making, new medicines, new styles of architecture, use of china wares, taste of spices and sugar, cloth made of cotton, and new ideas in social and cultural fields.

Braudel, the French historian, points out that the significance of Europe is that though it is divided into a number of countries. however, there is unity which binds

all these countries together. Any technological and scientific invention and cultural and philosophical development immediately spreads to all European countries and becomes a part of a greater European culture. This is unique position which is not found in any other continent. The second aspect of European civilisation which distinguishes it from other civilisations, according to certain historians, is individualism.

Satish Saberwal, an Indian sociologist, finds European civilisation different to others in one respect is that it had a tradition and culture of documentation. It was the tradition to document everything. In the medieval period, monks of monasteries used to document every event. It was also their custom to copy the manuscripts. This was what became the treasure trove for the Renaissanc humanists who found classical literature in the libraries of monasteries and retrieved it for their use.

The Eurocentric point of view is challenged by a group of historians who analysed its rise with a broader perspective. According to them, the external factors played an important role in Europes rise and one must account for these on top of all the internal factors mentioned above. The major argument of these historians is that the discovery of America and its natural resources turned the fate of Europe. Otherwise before 1492, Asian and African countries were as developed as Europe. Silver and gold from the mines of Brazil provided them with the resources to pay cash for spices which they bought from India and Far East .Moreover, they shifted their excess population to the New World which reduced its social, and economic problems. Potatoes, tomatoes, and tobacco from America helped their economy.

They also point out the trade with the East and its profit caused an accumulation of capital which later on resulted in Industrial Revolution which subsequently was a catalytic factor in starting the process of colonisation.

Therefore, according to these revisionist histoians, rise of Europe was not a miracle but result of internal as well as external forces. Eurocentrism plagues historian and political theorists to this day and it manifests itself in the internal and foreign policies of many Western governments. The roots of this lie in this study of history where European progress is termed a miracle. It is high time that this Eurocentric perspective was revised.

Monasteries and khanqahs
The socioeconomics of mysticism

Generally, in every religion there were individuals as well as groups of people who believed that this world was sinful, ugly and corrupt. Therefore, to shun all worldly affairs and adopt an ascetic life was propagated by all religions to a certain extent. Among the Hindus, there were individuals who after leaving their family and property, retired to forests or mountains and spent their time in meditation to gain spiritual ecstasy. The same practice was followed by Buddhism and Jainism who created a class of priests who were engaged in prayer and meditation all year round. Rulers, nobles and traders built vihars for them in isolated places such as thick forests or caves where they could worship peacefully without any outside interference. Ajanta and Elora are such caves. These communities of worshippers depended on society and were supported in exchange of their spiritual blessing.

In early Christianity, individuals adopted the life of asceticism by retiring to deserts and worshipping in isolation for the salvation of their soul. The first monastery was founded in the 3rd century in the desert of Egypt. As the number of monks increased, rulers started to build monasteries for them where they lived a communal life and spent their life dedicated to religion. This class was known as monks. In the beginning, each monastery had its own management to administer it. Consequently, there were cases of mismanagement and corruption. Realising these defects, St Benedict (d. 542 AD) introduced rules and

regulations for its administration which were adopted by all monasteries. These rules were based on two principles: prayer and work. These two features disciplined the life of the monks and they divided their time between prayers and manual labour.

It was the custom in the Medieval Europe that rulers used to build monasteries and allotted land for its expenses. These were far from the cities; either in deserts or forests or on the top of mountains. According to St. Benedicts rules, monks had to supervise agriculture and within the premise of the monastery, they looked after cattle, worked for dairy products, ground wheat, baked bread, cooked food, and ate their meal in simplicity along with their colleagues. It was their responsibility to keep the monastery clean, do all the menial chores and also spend some time in copying manuscripts. There was a special room for this purpose. As there was no paper in the medieval period, they prepared parchment for writing. They preserved these manuscripts in the library.

There was a hospital for the sick in the monastery. They were treated by herbal medicines. A special room was for visitors who could stay for a limited time. There are documents which were found in these monasteries which were written by monks mentioning important events such as natural calamities and political crises. They are now the best source for historians writing about the religious and social life of the period.

A monastery was administered by an abbot .All inmates obeyed him. People were not allowed to visit and interfere in the life of monks. Its gates remained closed. It was regarded as a sacred sanctuary and in case if anybody took refuge inside it, secular authorities could not arrest him or hurt him.

The important thing was that the monastery was economically self-sufficient .Monks were a productive class who earned their livelihood and did not depend on

outside support. The combination of spiritual and manual labour changed the character of monks. It developed a culture which was known by its austerity and piety.

The institution of the khanqah emerged in the 10th century and soon spread throughout the Islamic world. These khanqahs were built by rulers and nobles in order to earn spiritual blessing. They were usually outside the city but accessible to people. The sheikh or murshid resided in it along with his family and some disciples. The khanqahs received regular donation known as futuh from rulers, nobles or wealthy citizens. There was also a public kitchen which served food to those who visited the Sufi saint. Thus, it was not a productive institution but depended on the financial support from outside. Unlike the monks, the khanqahs inmates did not earn their livelihoods.

However, the gates of the khanqah were open for people who thronged it for spiritual blessings of the sheikh. It became a practice that after the death of the sheikh, he was buried in the premises of the khanqah and this led to the new institution of the shrine coming into being in the 13th century. It became a centre for pilgrims.

The Buddhist Bhakshus and the Muslim Sufis were economically a burden on society. They depended on the generosity of the rich and wealthy perople.The institution of khanqah was supported by rulers because it restrained the discontent of the general public by advising them to bear and endure all hardships to get the reward in the next world.

Like Christian monasteries, there were no set rules for khanqahs. Each had its own rules and regulations to administer it. Sufis, unlike monks, mingled with people and prayed for the fulfillment of their wishes.

Both institutions continue to exist since medieval times to the present. However, in Muslim society, the shrine has superseded the khanqah in social importance and became the more popular institution.

Mysticism as empowerment

In ancient and medieval periods, society was hierarchical and strictly divided into the privileged and deprived classes. Rulers enjoyed absolute power which was derived by claims to a divine right to rule. Aristocracy, as a pillar of the kingship, formed the top tier of society. Common people were mere subjects and obliged to remain loyal to the ruling classes. In this milieu emerged mysticism in different religions to respond these particular challenges. The response was not to resist or to rebel against the system but to construct a parallel system within it to adjust to the social structure.

Mystic orders, first of all, established their image as holders of spiritual power by engaging in prayer and ascetic practices through withdrawing from worldly affairs. They shunned worldly luxuries and condemned possession of property, wealth, opulent living styles and the arrogance of the ruling classes. Rather they chose a life of poverty, humility, and independence from all worldly comforts. They withdrew from active life and busied themselves in prayer and worship to elevate their spiritual status. As a result of their spiritual power, they acquired such a position that people flocked to them, instead of rulers and nobility, to fulfil their demands. It was believed that they could directly communicate with God and intercede on the behalf of the supplicants while the rulers had no such power. Common people who were deprived and had no status in society became powerful after joining mystical orders. They got this position with the help of spirituality without having any property, riches or resources.

As they did not interfere in political matters of the state, generally, there was no clash between the mystic orders and ruling classes except in a few cases where rulers found their presence a threat and then dealt with it with force. In the history of the Delhi Sultanate, we find two examples. In one instance, a saint whose hospice became a centre for frustrated nobles who were conspiring against the rulers was killed by Sultan Alauddin Khilji (1296 to 1316). In the second case, Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughluq (1320-1325) demanded Nizamuddin Auliya (1238 - 1325) to return the money which was given to the saint by a usurper of throne, Khuru Malik. When he was on his way to Delhi back from his Bengal expedition and wanted to get back the amount, the saint is reported to have remarked that Hanuz Dilli door ast (Still, Delhi is far away). The Sultan soon died as result of the collapsing of a resting palace which had been built to welcome him. This established the spiritual power of the saint in the eyes of the public.

As the mystical orders acquired spiritual power, rulers, nobles and rich merchants and traders started to build houses for their meditation and prayer. In case of India, such places were built in caves for Buddhists monks. The beauty and grandeur of these reflected the devotion and piety of the builders. In the Christian world, monasteries were built to accommodate the monks. It appears that a large number of the unemployed chose to become monks and get a dignified place in society. In the Muslim world, Khanqah or hospices were built in respect of Sufi saints in the place where they lived along with their families and disciples. All these places became centres for pilgrims where they flocked to get the blessing of saints or priests. They became so sacred that if a criminal took refuge in these khanqahs, he could not be arrested or punished.

Such was the power of these saints and mystical orders that rulers sought their help and blessing whenever

they were facing a crisis or in trouble. The Sultans of Delhi turned towards the saints of their time to help them in their military expeditions. It is recorded in the biographies of the saints that all victories of the Sultans in India were due to the prayers of the Sufis. In one example, during the reign of Alauddin Khilji, the Mongol leader Targhi besieged the capital of Delhi. The Sultan was not in the position to defend against the invaders. It is said that he requested Nizamuddin Auliya to help him. The Mongol invader soon retreated and this was attributed to the saint and it was said that he had saved the city with his spiritual prowess. When the story was circulated, it made him even more popular and powerful then the rulers.

Akbar, the Mughal emperor, sought the help of Shaikh Salim Chishti, to get an heir to his throne. After the birth of Jahangir, he built the new capital at Fatehpur Sikri in gratitude to the Shaikh. He was impressed by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and decided to make a pilgrimage to his tomb at Ajmer barefooted. Seeing his sincerity and devotion, the Khwaja appeared in a dream of his noble and allowed him to travel normally. Since then, the Khwaja became the patron saint of the royal Mughal family. Thus, we find that spirituality empowered the mystical orders and their disciples and compelled politically powerful classes to humble themselves in their presence.

Ignoring history

Do it at your own peril

It is conventional wisdom that one can learn from history and avoid committing the same mistakes which were committed by our predecessors in the past. It is not wholly true. Of course one can gain an understanding of human nature by reading past history and can find the solution to problems of the present in its light. However, some people, particularly politicians of all ilks, try to find solutions to current problems by exclusively situating them in the present context believing that there is no need to learn from history. This approach sometimes leads to disastrous consequences. One cannot fully ignore the past. One such example where past precedent was ignored is the Treaty of Versailles which was concluded after the First World War. In the conference was a young British historian Charles Webster (1886-1961), the author of the The Congress of Vienna. Prior to this treaty at Versailles, a number of treaties were concluded after the defeat of Napoleon who had changed the whole map of Europe and redesigned it according to his ambitions. First, he was defeated in 1814 and exiled to St Elba. He could not stay as a prisoner there and escaped. He was welcomed by the French army and again fought a battle at Waterloo in 1815 in which he was again defeated. This time he was imprisoned at St Helena where chances of his escape were nil.

Metternich, the chancellor of Austria, who supervised and made all arrangement for the resettlement of Europe, was a conservative and wanted to check any

revolutionary movement. The main approach of the leaders at Vienna was not to punish the French nation. They accused Napoleon for all their troubles and imprisoned him. It was decided that the French monarch would be restored and the French were allowed to participate in the proceedings of the congress .The result of this policy was that the conservative powers of Europe ensured peace in Europe and prevented revolutionary movements. This leniency ensured that not only justice but done but the French nation was also put back on the road to recovery. The young historian Webster, by quoting the example of the Congress of Vienna advised the leaders who gathered at Versailles to decide the fate of Germany and implored them to treat it generously. His advice was ignored and the leaders decided on harsh terms of treatment whioh were imposed on Germany. The country had to pay a huge amount in reparation which destroyed her economy. It was forced to hand over some of its territory as punishment as well. When the terms of the treaty were ready, the German delegation was summoned in the presence of the leaders. They were not allowed to sit and kept standing like criminals. They were not given any chance to plead their case and were asked to sign the treaty or be ready for war. Humiliated and insulted, the German delegates had no choice but to sign the treaty which soon became unpopular in the country. The Germans called it a dikat.
When Hitler came to power, he mobilised nationalistic emotion of the German people against this very treaty. Germany wanted to regain its dignity and honour. When Hitler promised that, the Germans supported him. He soon not only made the country financially strong but got back the territory which it had lost as a result of treaty. After the occupation of France during the Second World War, Hitler forced France to sign a treaty which was in favour of Germany and restored the German honour.
It is argued by historians that the Treaty of Versailles laid

down the foundation of the Second World War by punishing the whole German nation as war criminals. It Germany had been treated as France had been in the Congress of Vienna, there could have been peace in Europe. A J P Taylor, the British historian in his book on The Origin of Second World War rightly points out that Treaty of Versailles structured Germany in such a manner that war became inevitable. Even without Hitler, Germany under any other leader would have had to go to war in efforts to undo the Treaty of Versailles which had humiliated it to a great extent. Therefore, Hitler may have been responsible for the war but it cannot be discounted that was operating in an environment which was conducive to his extremist rhetoric.

However, after the Second World War, Germany was not treated as it was when the Treaty of Versailles was finalised. On the contrary, the US gathered a huge amount of aid for Germany to restructure its economy. It was done to check the Russian influence in the country. Germany soon rebuilt itself and became a member of the western capitalist bloc. The same treatment of relative leniency was meted out to Japan which facilitated its rehabilitation and late led to Japan becoming a key international partner of the US. The motive of helping out both these countries was the same: to make them into allies of capitalism and use that against Russia. The diplomats who ignored history when the Treaty of Versailles was signed committed a grave mistake which led to much destruction in the form of the Second World War. They had learnt their lesson after that and took a wiser course of action in dealing with Germany and Japan.

Intellectuals and society

Whither the vanguard of change?

There are two types of writers: those who write to support the existing system and prove and augment its legitimacy through their writings. On the other hand, there are those who critically examine society and make an attempt to restructure and reform it on the basis of fresh ideas.

The task of intellectuals is to create social and political consciousness and give a sense of dignity and honour to people. It is further incumbent upon them not to compromise with the existing system but raise their voice against injustice, oppression, and exploitation. There have been intellectuals throughout the course of history who have paid a heavy price for their opposition to dictators and despots. They endured imprisonment and torture but remained firm about their ideas and principles. This changed history and they became immortal. The term 'intellectual' was coined in the 19th century in France for those writers, artists, philosophers, and journalists who as a group challenged the outdated and obsolete traditions and values of their society and proposed alternative system to reshape the social structure. In this respect, it is wrong to label those who support the exploitative status quo and flatter the ruling classes to achieve their self interest as 'intellectuals'.

If we go through European history, we find that intellectuals have played a positive and constructive role. In 18th century France, a group of philosophers not only challenged the old system of knowledge but changed the mindset of people. They contributed to all genres of

literature from philosophy to plays, short stories, novels, dramas, and serious topics of history, law and culture. Their major contribution was publication of an encyclopaedia: a novel idea at that time to present accumulated knowledge. The impact of this group of writers was very deep. Their ideas and philosophy was adopted by the French Revolutionary leaders in drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the different constitutions. European intellectuals expressed their original ideas at important junctures of history, when society was perfectly ripe for change. The French Revolution was an event which changed the course of European history. The intellectuals assessed the consequences of such a movement and helped the people by guiding them through their writings. The Industrial Revolution was another event which greatly influenced society and changed the relationship of classes. When Germany suffered as a result of the Napoleonic war and faced defeat and humiliation, the German intellectuals came forward to rescue it from this crisis. Herder and Fichte played an important role in creating a national consciousness among people which consequently led to the formation of a strong German nationalism. Thus, the intellectuals, keeping in view the condition of society, guided and pointed out the dynamics of new systems. Different movements which reformed the society were launched by the intellectuals such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Nationalism, socialism, and feminism. The first and second world wars shocked them and produced quite different movements in art and literature such as existentialism.

European intellectuals became independent in the 15th and the 16th century as a result of the invention of the printing press and the emergence of publishing houses. The new phenomenon created a consumer class who wanted to read books. The publishing of newspapers, magazines, journals, pamphlets, and books made writers financially

independent. Erasmus, the famous writer of the Renaissance era, survived on the income from his writings. With the spread of education and the establishment of public libraries and reading rooms, the demand fro books and public awareness about intellectual movements increased simultaneously. This changed the fate of writers. They became respectable in society because of their scholarly and intellectual contribution.

Keeping in view the role of these intellectuals, we find that they were independent, critical, original, and concerned about the problems of their time. As a result, they were able to change the structure of society and contribute to its betterment through reformative and innovative ideas.

Keeping in mind the vital role intellectuals have played throughout history, we can ask what the role of Pakistani intellectuals in our embattled society should be. First of all, in the category of intellectuals, we have only poets, short story writers and novelists. We do not have philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists or psychologists. **Journalists are now a part of intellectual community.**

This group as a whole is not critical about social, cultural, political, and economic values. With the exception of a few, the majority is on the side of established traditions and ready to sell their knowledge in exchange for material benefits. They are opportunists and change their ideas with the change in the political system. In the time of martial laws, they accommodate with the military regimes and during the democratic governments, they all of a sudden transform into champions of democracy. They are able to wrest high posts out of successive governments through these tactics. They shamelessly flatter each government and enjoy their high status in the society due to the influence their profession affords them.

The tragedy is that, despite knowing their character well, they are respected in society and invited to preside over different literary functions. It shows not only the hollowness of these so-called intellectuals but also of society. They remain silent at the critical juncture. At the time of military action in the former East Pakistan, they kept their silence and did not condemn it. It shows the bankruptcy of our intellectuals.

On the other hand, the few individuals who refuse to play the role of sycophants and try to challenge society and contribute something original are scorned and marginalised. **The society is paying the price for this in the form of its degradation and humiliation.**

Dictator dominoes

Falling one after the other?

It was the tradition in Ancient Greece that whenever their city republic plunged into political chaos and disorder, they handed over the government to a tyrant to restore peace and order. Generally, the duration of his rule was to be 7 years; after completing this period and restoring order in the city, he was asked to retire. Sometimes the tyrant continued and had to be forced by the people to relinquish his authority. Interestingly, this tradition continued in the 14th century in the city of Florence which invited some powerful man from outside on a contractual basis to maintain peace and order and leave the city after the completion of his mission. In most cases, the tyrants left according to the contract. If not, they were forced to leave the city.

These instances show that some empowered authority like a 'tyrant' of sorts was required to combat the forces of anarchy and to keep peace and tranquillity. But the authority did not use their power in negatively. He had popular support and restored stability of the government and its institutions. However, it is no longer so. The meaning of the word 'tyrant' has changed during modern times. Modern democratic notions have falsified the need for such centralised authority. Now a tyrant is a person who assumes power and uses absolute authority brutally by crushing the opposition against his rule .Therefore, tyranny is attributed to acts of exploitation, suppression and killing and massacring people.

The phenomenon of modern dictatorship emerged when Napoleon conducted a coup in 1799 against the

Revolutionary government with the motive to restore order which was disrupted by successive Revolutionary governments. To accomplish his mission, he used all kinds of coercive methods to crush all opposition and suppressed all the voices against his dictatorial power. He derived his authority from military power but he exposited the Revolutionary rhetoric to gain popular support. Once he established his position as the supreme leader, he transformed his dictatorship into an empire and assumed the title of emperor. However, his dream to establish a permanent empire and to colonise the whole of Europe by raising the slogans of equality, liberty, and fraternity failed as vanquished nations rebelled against French imperialism. He was finally defeated by Russia which not only disintegrated his empire but plunged France into chaos. After his defeat, he left France in disarray. Millions of French people who sacrificed to make him great only found defeat and humiliation in the end. That was a lesson from history that dictators, instead of stabilising their country, destroy it to fulfil their personal ambitions.In the ancient period, the role of a tyrant was to restore order and establish peace. In the modern period, since Napoleon, dictators have assumed the role of self-styled reformers and saviours of the nations. Benito Mussolini mobilised the national sentiments of the Italians and promised to revive the glories of the Roman Empire. Adolf Hitler set out to rescue the German nation from humiliation and to create a sense of racial pride. In return, both dictators demanded people to surrender their fundamental rights and obey them without any question. They did and both dictators destroyed their countries in the name of greatness. Mussolini was hunted down and hanged upside down by people while Hitler committed suicide. The German nation is still struggling to get rid of Hitler's legacy and the consequences of his dictatorship. After decolonisation, military dictators emerged in the Third World. The colonial

governments left the institution of the army stronger than other institutions of the state. This created political ambition in the army to grasp power in the name of reform and progress. When Ayub Khan assumed power in 1958 by accusing politicians of corruption and maladministration, he declared that he would bring change and restructure the state institutions. However, after a decade, it was found that the country instead of progressing was facing all kinds of problem and his government had miserably failed to arrest the decline of society. People were disappointed and launched a campaign against his rule. It was a novel phenomenon that a dictator had been dislodged by a popular movement rather than by some kind of internal conspiracy. He failed to crush it and resigned under pressure. The same process was repeated in case of Pervez Musharraf when the lawyers' movement dislodged him and he had to leave.

Popular movements against dictators emerged recently in the Middle East. It shows the empowerment of people and a rejection of the notion of dictators that they are invincible, popular and loved by their people. It is what the sycophants and flatterers tell the dictators repeatedly and such delusions are further strengthened on the basis of conducting rigged referendums in which people vote overwhelmingly in their favour. Recent protests shocked dictators who were 'elected' by referendums without any challenge for decades. Still, these dictators were not ready to understand that people want change of rule and not continuity. Many of these dictators now had a choice before them: either to surrender voluntarily (as happened in the case of Mubarak) or to be ousted by bloody civil war (as happened in the case of Muammar Qaddafi). People's power has emerged with such force that the western imperial powers (to whom these dictators suited) have now changed their foreign policy: instead of supporting these cronies, they are now favouring the people's movements.

Perhaps it will take some time to consolidate the democratic institutions in nations with these movements but one thing is for sure: the political scene in those countries where dictators ruled absolutely is going to change.

Challenge and response

Survival of the persevering

History is a repository of human experiences and one can not only understand the present by studying history but also find solutions to its problems as well. However, historians sometimes present a very pessimistic view of life whereas at other times, they inspire dejected and disillusioned people to struggle for survival.

Oswald Spengler, the German historian, published his book Decline of the West in 1917 and predicted the death of the Western civilization with such forceful and convincing arguments that it made the whole society gloomy. Although, it was a time when Western civilisation was at a great height.The Western powers had colonised most of the Asian and African countries and built their societies on their natural resources. Then the First World War occurred which shocked Europe and demolished its idea of progress. In this atmosphere of gloom and destruction of war, the prediction of Spengler appeared to be correct,Toynbee, the British historian, published his book The Study of History in 10 volumes which came out from 1934 to 1954 which gave hope to the European civilisation by presenting his theory of 'challenge and response'. He studied nearly 23 civilisations and concluded that those who responded to the challenges that came before them effectively survived and those who failed, perished. Therefore, it could be inferred from his analysis that in the case of the Western civilisation, its survival and existence would depend on its response to the challenges that were before it. We can see that the Western civilization by producing new knowledge and by exhibiting creativity

and fresh perspectives in different aspects of life is preventing its decline.

A community which has responded to severe challenges throughout its history is the Jewish community. In Europe, the Jews suffered all kinds of persecution. They were expelled from France, England, Germany, and Spain but survived because of their perseverance and talents. They engaged in business and excelled at it. The Rothschild family expanded its banking network from Germany to the whole of Europe. Three branches of the family consolidated their financial power in Germany, France, and England. The other aspect in which the Jewish community specialised was scholarship. They produced the best philosophers, writers, social scientists, and scientists. Their domination in business and scholarship transformed the community from a persecuted people to a valuable asset for Western civilization.

We can find many similar examples of minorities learning to survive in different societies by adapting and acquiring vital skills. Often, minority communities acquired knowledge and education to be become a vital part for society. The Christian community in the Ottoman Empire excelled in the art of bureaucracy and administered the empire. The Parsi community in India became the best trading community and earned respect in society because of their skill, hard work and honesty. Hence the action of minority communities throughout the ages have served to demonstrate Toynbee theorising of 'challenge and response' and proved that the better a community responds to hurdles, the better are its chances for survival and progress.

We can apply this theory to understand our own history as well. When the Zoroastrians migrated and arrived in India, they preserved their religious identity but adopted the local culture of Maharashtra including the language. Then, they turned their energies to business,

trade and commerce and acquired a reputation as good traders. The local rulers respected the community as they were getting economic benefits from them. During the colonial period, the community was the first to adopt Western culture and expanded their business to other parts of India. The community also contributed to the welfare of society. Mumbai and Karachi are the best examples of their work and contribution.

The Bengalis were also amongst the first few communities to respond to colonial challenges by adopting Western education. They competed in the civil service examination and joined the colonial administration. Modern education made them politically conscious of their fundamental rights. When Bengal was partitioned in 1905, the Bengalis launched a campaign and boycotted English goods. They were the first who resorted to such means to achieve their political aims. The British government finally surrendered and annulled the partition. Not only were they politically active but intellectually too. The intellectual response of the Bengalis was to produce excellent literature and create a vibrant identity of their own rooted in regional culture and tradition. Because they had formulated such a strong identity, they played an important role in the struggle for independence against colonialism. The Muslim community in India faced problems after the decline of the Mughal Empire. The Muslim aristocracy found it self helpless and disillusioned after 1857 and was despondent and had lost all hope of survival. Under these circumstances, the community responded in two distinct ways. One was the foundation of the Deoband madrassah in 1868 to preserve religious identity and to prevent the Muslims from adopting European cultural values. The other was the establishment of Aligarh College to motivate Muslim youth to get modern education in order to get government jobs. However, the Muslims as a community faced strong competition in the acquiring of these

government jobs. To avoid it, they demanded a quota in the services. Politically, they were threatened by the Hindu majority which led them to launch a campaign to partition the Indian subcontinent and create a new homeland of their own where they could get jobs without any competition. However, the new country did not prove challenge free. Since its inception, it has been facing political, social, cultural, and economic challenges.

To respond to these challenges, the society, in the words of Toynbee requires a 'creative minority'.. This minority of intellectual is absent in Pakistan. There are plenty of demagogues and brainless speakers. Many of the society's ideologues still look to military dictatorships as a means to solve its problems. But when these dictatorships fail to perform, these people revert back to politicians who soon disappoint them by their 'corruption' and 'intellectual bankruptcy'. How long society will survive in the swing of this pendulum, it is difficult to predict...

Superpowers through the ages

The Roman Empire was one of the great empires in history. It extended from Europe to Asia and included hundreds of nations and tribes as its subjects. To maintain its greatness, it continuously fought bloody battles, suppressed rebellions with brutality, enslaved the vanquished people and plundered the wealth of the defeated nations. Historians still admire the generalship of Pompey, Julius Caesar and Augustus who conquered new lands and pushed the borders of the empire ahead. The books of history still depict the fascinating scenes when the victors returned from the battlefield along with war booty and slaves that were given to the kings and princesses and paraded in the city of Rome as war trophies. By watching this spectacle, people applauded their war heroes and welcomed them back enthusiastically.

The grandeur and its heritage inspired the later ruling generations of Europe who time and again made attempt to revive its political institutions and its past glory. In 9th century, Charlemagne built the Carolingian empire on the same basis. He was crowned by the Pope which transformed him as the Holy Roman Emperor. This institution continued even after losing its power and became in Voltaire's words neither Holy nor Roman, and not Emperor. It was finally ended by Napoleon in 1812. When Napoleon conducted a coup in 1799 against the Revolutionary Directory of France, he called himself the first council on the model of Roman Republic. His ambitions were to follow the great Roman generals and found a great empire. In the 20th century, Benito Mussolini

raised the slogan to revive the Roman Empire and its greatness. Though Hitler did not make such claims but the show and pageantry of Nazi rule reflected the power and grandeur of the Romans.

When the British started the process of colonisation, its administrators and army officers studied Roman history and emulated the great Roman heroes in their efforts to colonise new territories and make their country like the great Roman Empire. The American Founding Fathers were also impressed by the Roman history and its political institutions. The coming American generations are still trying to make their country a great superpower like the Roman Empire.

The problem is that all those who made efforts to follow in the footsteps of the Romans have studied only its success and triumphs and not its downfall and disintegration. The Roman Empire became so vast that it became impossible to manage. In the later period, a new system was introduced that instead of one there were four emperors to control the rebellions of the colonised nations. It failed. Finally, it was defeated and humiliated by the Germanic tribes who conquered the city of Rome in the 5th century and ended the empire. Gibbon in The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire points out the causes of its downfall. One of them was the civil wars among its generals for power which exhausted its energy and its armies no longer remained in a position to confront the rebellions. Secondly, conversion to Christianity weakened its military power because a large number of people abandoned worldly affairs and concentrated on the salvation of their souls. Pirenne, the Belgian historian, in his book Muhammad (pbuh) and Charlemagne argues that the conquest of North Africa and domination on the Mediterranean by the Arabs blocked the trade routes of the Romans which created an economic crisis leading to its fall.

Historians also point out the policy of enslavement of the defeated people as one of the reasons of its decline. As a result of this policy, the population of the slaves increased and the nobles evicted the peasants from their land and employed the slaves to cultivate it. The evicted and unemployed peasants left their homes and came to the cities for work. It produced an unemployed and disgruntled population which was ready to disestablish the system. Historians call them 'the internal barbarians' who caused the downfall of the Empire. The nobles, fearing the wrath of crowd, left the cities and retired to their villas in the countryside. When the Germanic tribes besieged the city of Rome, there was nobody to defend it.

One finds some similarities in the decline of other great empires. The first and foremost reason was the rise of nationalist sentiments among the subject nations. They rebelled against the imperial powers and made it difficult for them to manage them and control their power. All European imperial powers faced the same situation when the colonised nations challenged their rule and forced them to withdraw. Once they were involved in warfare, they exhausted their financial resources which affected their societies. The economic crisis from within and outside compelled them to return to their original borders. At present, the Americans are facing the same problems. The stretch of their 'empire' is sucking their resources and talents. Their presence is not liked by the people who are under their political and cultural domination. As a result of this. there are resistant movements. Though, like all imperial powers, they rely on the cooperation of local collaborators, but increasingly, it is becoming difficult to trust them as they are discredited by the people. This is a dilemma for the Americans: how to react. The problem is that the very concept of being a superpower is intoxicating. It creates arrogance which makes its rulers blind to the ground realities and blinkers their

understanding. Consequently, the fall comes with humiliation.

Those imperial powers that adapted the model of the Roman Empire and observed its military glory and ignored its decline did not learn from history and committed the same mistakes and suffered ignoble defeat.

Divvying up history

Periodisation frameworks and interpretation

Historical process is not a linear one. It is also not stagnant. On the contrary, it moves ahead and brings changes to social, political and economic structure. Historians of the modern period, keeping these changes in view, divide history into different periods signifying the change.In the medieval period, the concept of history was dominated by religion and historical process was thought to be related to divine scheme. According to this particular belief, there was a beginning and end of history. In this context, periodisation was based in the framework of Biblical narratives. History started from the Adam and was divided according to the age of coming prophets. The religious periodisation failed to understand the human evolution and development of human civilisation. Therefore, during the Renaissance, this periodisation changed and the humanist scholars introduced the modern periodisation of history. This liberated history from religious dogma and secularised it.The scope of history has broadened since archaeologists discovered sites of old civilisations which were hitherto unknown to the world. Archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians introduced quite a different periodisation which helped to understand the changes which occurred from time to time in the history of humankind.To understand the origin and development of human civilisation, archaeologists periodised it into the following eras: Hunting and Gathering, Old Stone Age, Middle Stone Age, New Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. Based on this division, they assessed the discovered civilisations of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indus Valley, the

Chinese, the Greek and the Roman.Historians, on the other hand, divided history as pre-history (whose written record is not available), proto-history (whose written and oral record is accessible) and the beginning of history (whose written record is the source of its writing). Written history is divided as Ancient, Medieval, and Modern. However, all these three periods are loosely applied by historians as far as the time line is concerned. There is also a new period called post-modern history which deals with present events.Ancient and Medieval history is further subdivided on the basis of ruling dynasty such as the Abbasid, the Ghaznavids, the Tudors, and the Bourbons. This kind of periodisation was also used politically to undermine the importance of a certain aspect of history. William James, the author of The History of British India, writing from the colonial point of view, divided the Indian history as the Hindu period, the Muslim period and the British period.

His periodisation is on the basis of religion. However he did not characterise British history as Christian and emphasised a secular approach to its own history. By this division, his implicit message was that the British, as a secular power, would maintain peace and prevent conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims.When history widened its scope and freed itself from politics, historians analysed its process on the basis of ideas and thoughts. Therefore, we find the terms like the Age of Faith, the Age of Reason, Age of Enlightenment or Age of Revolution etc. Those historians who believe that individuals are makers of history have attributed whole ages to their favorite person. A particular example of such usage is Age of Napoleon named after the famous Frenchman. Besides politicians and rulers, historians also included religious leaders and the philosophers whose ideas, in their opinion, changed the course of history. Will Durant's famous series includes the Age of Voltaire and The Age of Rousseau.As history no more remains 'past politics', social and economic aspects

of past history are now equally highlighted by historians. The concept of history from below changed its structure and made it more attractive and interesting. History of people has become popular and historians are now documenting the history of those groups of peoples who were ignored and sidelined by traditional historians. New subfields such as "history of sensibilities" and the history of daily life have transformed history and reinvigourated it as a dynamic subject.Thus, we find that periodicities of history reflect the thinking of historians with respect to their interpretive framework. These categorisations are not accepted by all historians and there are often academic disputes about whether a periodisation is valid. For example, the William James division was challenged by the Indian historians arguing that there were also Buddhist rulers in ancient India and thus it was not correct to label it the "Hindu period". The same is true about medieval India which was ruled both by Muslim and Hindu rulers. Therefore, it is not correct to call it the "Muslim period".Similarly, some historians do not accept the role of individuals and point out that without economic, social and multiple other forces, an individual cannot contribute to history. The varieties of interpretations and different points of view provide more arguments to comprehend and analyse the historical process.Keeping in view this background, when we analyse the periodisation of Pakistan' history, all credit for making it is attributed to particular individuals. This attribution ignores people's participation and their sacrifices. The result of such history writing is that people rely on individuals to rescue them from troubles as they did in the past. They have lost all faith in their own power and resources. This is what the ruling classes want. The traditional historians are repeating the same arguments again and again to emphasise the role of individuals and neglecting the potential power of the people. Our history textbooks fully reflect this point of

view which is further perpetuated by the media. To create a mature historical consciousness, there is a dire need to change history writing in Pakistan.

The judgment of history

Let no one be spared

Historians are still debating the question of passing moral judgments within the study of history. Those who believe that it is not the task of history to pass any judgment argue that the responsibility of historians is to reports the events as they happened without any distortion or alteration. According to them, historians are not reformists or moralists to comment on the basis of good or evil. It entirely depends on the readers and how they want to judge the events after reading and analysing them, and then make a decision about its underlying moral value for themselves.

Anti-moralist groups especially spared the great individuals through history from the ambit of moral judgment. They argue that their acts are beyound ordinary morality because whatever they do, it is for the larger interest of a country or nation or for the whole of humankind. This justified their deception, lies, and killing and massacring of people, ironically, in the name of peace, and humanity.

On the other hand, there are those historians who believe that it is their responsibility not only to narrate the events but also to give their opinion on the basis of moral values. Lord Acton, who was famous for the dictum 'All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely', was against the anti-moralist approach. He was a staunch believer in the fact that historians should judge all individuals – whether kings, dictators or heroes – on the basis of morality. If they were spared by any punishment in

their time because of their powerful positions, they should not be spared by modern historians for their crimes. He condemns those historians who find justifications for rulers and great individuals who had killed and massacred people for the sake of their power. According to him, such historians come forward with a sponge to clean the bloody dagger of these rulers; the actions of these historians reward and purify the acts of brutality and barbarity. He asserts that Queen Elizabeth should be tried as a murderer if she would killed Queen Mary of Scot. And, so should Alexander, whom historians painted as great, on the massacre of thousands and thousands of people just for the sake of his glory and grandeur.

If history remains neutral and does not condemn and declare such acts as immoral, it would fail to create any consciousness about these evil deeds. We have seen the result of this approach in our own time. Take the example of United States and its crimes in Vietnam. All American presidents who were responsible for killing of the millions of Vietnamese were not tried as war criminals. The American government inscribed the names of those American soldiers who died in Vietnam and glorified their bravery but completely ignored those Vietnamese who were gassed and brutally killed by the American forces. Ronald Reagan is a hero in the history of the USA. His crime in the 'Iran-Contra affair' in supporting Iran against Nicaragua is forgotten. Bush and Blair, who are responsible for the Iraqi invasion and killing of more than 150, 0000 civilians, have not been tried on the charges of massacre. There are hundreds of such examples which traditional historians describe and dismiss as the 'natural process of history.' General Dyre, who was responsible for the Jallianwala massacre, was elevated to the status of hero by the well-educated British public as the saviour of the British Empire. Gene Kelly, responsible for the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, was transformed into a hero by the

Americans. Hence, many such criminal have escaped the judgment of history and have been glorified. When it comes to moral judgment, the historians of the oppressed and the oppressors are divided. Jewish historians accused Hitler and his Nazi party for the killing of millions of Jews during the Second World War, known as the Holocaust. Such is the moral pressure of this historical depiction, that its denial is a criminal act in some European countries. The Israeli state asserts that this term should exclusively be reserved for the Jewish massacre and should not be applied to other nations who have suffered a similar atrocity. However, on the other hand, the state of Israel is killing and massacring the Palestinians since 1948 and it has no moral qualms with that. Those European powers who accused Hitler keep silent on the mayhem unleashed upon the Palestinians. It shows that their support of Israel or condemnation of Hitler does not have any moral basis but is rather based on political considerations; if they condemn the Holocaust (which was indeed a grave crime against humanity), they should condemn the violence of similar magnitude being wrought upon the Palestinians. In the case of Pakistan, the military action taken against the Bengalis in 1970 is ignored by local historians. Even those perpetrators who were responsible for the mass killing of the Bengalis were not tried and punished. They came back and lived a respectable life. There is no sense of guilt, whether amongst certain sections of the ruling classes or amongst the people. The official whitewashing of history has impacted that to some extent. On the other hand, Bangladeshi historians have documented the crimes of the Pakistan army and have judged it on the basis of morality. The question is that if the study of history fails to create a sense of guilt for one's and one's nations past sins, such incidents would be repeated again and again and people of oppressive nations would continue to support such acts. It is true that governments try to hide facts from public in

order to hide their crimes and this subterfuge does a lot to distort history. But when the facts come to light, as they invariably do sooner or later, history should be rewritten and those who committed crimes must be condemned. However, it is also an unfortunate fact that, in such a situation, there are only a few historians who strive to bring the hidden facts to light and correct the version of history. Though there are few voices against the falsification and distortion of history, their impact is deep and lasting. There is a need to rewrite a history does not spare conquerors, national heroes, and great individuals of their crimes against humanity. They should be pulled down from their high pedestals and be treated as ordinary criminals.

Agents of change

In every society, agents of change play an important role to rescue it from slumber and stagnation. If they are active and energetic, they challenge the old system and make attempts to convince people that change in every aspect of life is the need of the time. If they are weak and reluctant to take bold steps and compromise with the status quo, they lose their importance and integrity.Among the agents of change are intellectuals, students, workers, peasants, women, minority groups, political parties, and pressure groups. If we study history, we can evaluate how these agents have brought change in their respective societies and endured all kinds of troubles and sufferings as a result of challenging and criticising outdated and corrupt systems endorsed by the ruling classes who were their direct or indirect beneficiaries and wanted to crush any movement against the system which upheld their privileged position. However, in spite of difficulties, these agents changed despotic political systems and popularised democratic institutions. They struggled for freedom of expression and protection of human rights. They contributed to the establishment of welfare states in European societies. They fought against racism and created religious tolerance. There is success and failure in their attempt to change the mindset of people but if they remain active and continue to play their role, they keep society ready for change and prevent it from stagnation.Keeping in view this background, we have to analyse the role of the agents of change in Pakistan. First of all, the question is that what is the contribution of our intellectuals towards the

process of change? Unfortunately, the intellectual tradition in our society is very weak. Intellectuals are not independent and always act in a subordinate role. To control them, successive governments have established organistaions like 'The Writers' Guild' or 'Academy of Letters', and instituted some prizes for them. Some writers, over the course of our history, have sold themselves for such cheap trifles. The few who have challenged the status quo were isolated and abandoned by their community. The result of this intellectual poverty is that we have not produced any prominent thinker, philosopher or social scientist and, as a result, there are no new ideas which could change the thinking of society and initiate debate on critical issues.Journalists and columnists, again with a few exceptions, are ready to sell tifeir writings in exchange for plots in housing societies or for some other benefits. Both intellectuals and journalists have lost their credibility. They are not capable of bringing any constructive change in the society. Not only has their integrity been compromised, they have become champions of outdated traditions and institutions and support them shamelessly.Universities are not only seats of learning but are also centres for creative knowledge. Both teachers and students are always in search of new ideas and thoughts which could open new political, social and economic avenues. If universities fail to produce any new knowledge, obsolete ideas cannot aid the process of bringing about change. We inherited the colonial educational system which continued after independence without any change. The teaching community was docile and adhered to the policies of the government, whether good or bad, and did not come forward as champion of any radical ideology.In the early period of Pakistan history, the student community was politically very active and raised their voice against social injustice and religious discrimination. When Ayub Khan imposed martial law in 1958, the student community challenged it. To curb their

movement, the martial law regime took a number of steps. First of all, student unions were banned; then police raided university campuses and arrested the leaders. Some active leaders were exiled from Karachi. It was also proposed that the government could withdraw the degree of those students who were found active in politics. This policy was continued with some changes by the coming governments. To fill the gap of union, political parties organised their groups in the campuses. It gradually changed the character of student unions and had an impact on the way students engaged in politics. When a political party in power supported its student's organisation, they dominated and dictated their own terms to the administration.At present, these students' organisations threaten teachers, patronise cheating in the examinations and getting bhatta from shopkeepers on campus. The public image of student politics has changed. Where once they were considered crusaders for change, they are now merely considered hooligans who are not interested in gaining knowledge. They are interested in socio-political issues no more. They have lost their status as agents of change.Trade unions of workers have met with a similar fate. Successive martial laws imposed such laws which made them inactive. The considerable political impact they wielded in the earlier days ebbed away with time to become virtually non-existent. The introduction of pocket unions curtailed their activities. Besides the government's hostility, corruption prevailed among the leaders of the trade unions. Workers were no longer politically and socially conscious of the problems of society. Their role as an agent of change also came to an end.Women's organisations emerged with full energy during the period of Zia-ul-Haq and challenged the anti-women measures of the government by organising conferences and public demonstrations, and publicising their views. However, gradually, these organisations failed to build on the momentum and slowed down their

activities.Religious minorities, who can also be agents of change, are excluded from the mainstream of politics and legally discriminated against. They are active but they are confined only to their communities. Generally, the public is not ready to listen to their grievances. Peasants, too, are no longer a potent force for change. In a strong feudal culture, they are not in a position to raise their voice against exploitation. Examples like that of the Okara peasant movements can be cited but these movements were partly successful because of their location and all such movements lack political organisation and proper mobilisation.As far as political parties are concerned, their leaders are not interested in changing the basic structure of society. They are adherents of continuity and not proponents of change. Different political, social, and literary pressure groups are there who are active in limited areas but these groups are scattered and therefore heir impact is not widespread.Recently, the media has emerged as an active agent of change. But its primary weakness is that it can create awareness but it has no power to implement programmes of social or political change. To exploit awareness, again there is a need for political activists. Mere awareness cannot play any role in transforming society.Thus when there are no effectual agents of change, we have to wait for a longer period for any radical change to come about.The writer is one of the pioneers of alternate history in the country.

On Indo-Pak relations

Give peace a chance

There are always ups and downs in relationships between two neighbouring countries: they fight, negotiate for peace, and finally resolve their differences. To normalise relations, culture plays an important role. Music, dance, theatre, and literature create mutual understanding and reduce political tension. It brings people closer without any interference of the ruling classes. As far as Indo-Pakistan relations are concerned, sadly, they have seen more downs than ups, more hostility than friendship, and more politics that cultural exchange.

It is not the interest of political parties, especially religious parties to have good relations with India. Hostility with India provides an opportunity to politicians to exploit the emotions of people on such issues which are not resoluble and to create bitterness against India in order to obtain popularity. Religious parties oppose such relationship as they are threatened by the invasion of 'the Hindu culture' in the shape of films, music, and other cultural entertainment. It is their policy to keep the country pure and protect it from pollution of irreligious trends. Neither the media people nor the film industry have any interest in cultural exchange between the two countries. There is a ban on screening Indian films in public cinemas although the CDs of all Indian films are available widely and people watch them without having any sense of hostility. The Indian TV channels are banned on the pretext of their anti-Pakistan propaganda. There are no Indian newspapers available in the market. Occasionally, some

Indian publishers are allowed to bring their books to exhibit in book fairs. There are restrictions for scholars to attend academic conferences and seminars. They have to get a no objection certificate from different agencies before they can apply for and get their visa.

The majority of our intellectuals and columnists are not in favour of good relations. Urdu columnists especially write fiery columns to create hostility among people in the name of patriotism. In such an atmosphere, if some individual talks of friendship and normalising relations, they immediately accuse him/her of being an Indian agent and advise him/her to leave Pakistan and go to India. The textbook writers are very emotional and keen to point out differences between the Hindus and the Muslims in every aspect of life. They want to keep the two nation theory alive. One of the writers has such enthusiasm in this respect that he shows the differences not only of dress, food, houses but also cites that the Hindu trees are Peepal and Bargad, while the Muslim trees are Palm and Olive. The sacred animal for the Hindu is cow, while for the Muslim it is camel. These textbooks leave no common ground between these nations to allow them to come closer culturally or historically. In our textbooks, we disown our history and the past of ancient India and begin our history form the Arab invasion of Sindh and link our past with the Muslim history of the Middle East.

Of course, our army and intelligence agencies oppose any cordial relationship. Their task is to defend not only the geographical but also the ideological boundaries of this country. In case of friendship, they would loose their importance. Supposed danger from India puts our country permanently in peril. It makes security more important than development. Hence, it is a natural corollary that the armed forces would like to keep this perception alive. From time to time, our bureaucracy and the state representatives have meetings of foreign ministers and secretaries of foreign

affairs in pleasant atmosphere. Such meetings are held under foreign pressure and always announce the opening of a new chapter in bilateral relations; unfortunately, the chapter is often closed before it can even be opened. Such meetings so far have proved to be a mere show and a drama which is played again and again without achieving any tangible results.

There is one section of society that wants to have friendly relations. They are the traders whose interest is to have markets for their goods and the Indian markets provide them with huge opportunities to sell their commodities. However, our traders are not strong enough to pressurise the state to accept their demands. They just pass resolutions in their chambers of commerce and express their willingness to trade with India without any response from the state.

As far as the people are concerned, there are those families in both India and Pakistan whose relatives live on the other side of the border. These divided families are disappearing with the passage of time. After two or three generations, the relatives have become strangers to each other. The generation that migrated is also declining with time. Still, there some old people who want to visit their cities or village before death but there are such restrictions of visa that it has become impossible to go on this simple visit to one's ancestral city or place of birth. The ruling classes of both countries have failed to realise the pain and sorrow of these divided families. The Partition separated sister from brother and son and daughter from their parents. Sadly, some of them did not get a chance to meet each other in their life. They paid a heavy cost for independence. Recently, the Indian government requires visa seekers to get their domestic bills and an affidavit signed by the police thana of the area and one from the headmaster of the school of their host. It simply means that there would be no visa to

visit relatives. Moreover, it is an irony that both states treat each other citizens as criminal and ask them to report to police for their arrival and departure. They are allowed to visit only two or three cities. Furthermore, they are harassed by intelligence agencies on both sides. Sadly, people of both countries have become strangers to each other. The two nation theory is becoming stronger and stronger. The people-to-people dialogue which created good will between these two countries failed to convince the ruling classes to understand the feelings and wishes of people who want to have close and friendly relations with each other.

Remembering July 14

July 14, 1789 is a memorable day not only in the history of France but in the history of the world. That day, the people of Paris rose against their corrupt and inefficient government and expressed their anger by demolishing the castle of Bastille. It was for the first time that people showed their power with such vigour and intensity. The pertinent question that is to be asked (and has been asked frequently) is that why did this happen in France. France emerged as a great power under the rule of Louis XIV, who was known as the 'Sun King'. France accumulated great wealth and the royalty showed its grandeur and glory by building palaces and gardens. Not satisfied and happy in Paris living along with common people who were subject to poverty and misery, Louis decided to build a new capital far from people's sight. This new capital of magnificence was Versailles. To the royalty, it was happiest and comfortable place as it was away from crowd.

Louis XIV ordered the French nobility to come and live in Versailles. His motive was to keep them away from their landed property in order to avoid tne chance of them being subject to any conspiracy or rebellion He kept them under his surveillance. Soon the capital became a centre of feasts, debauchery and mutual jealousy. The king enjoyed being surrounded by sycophants. As royal and feudal powers and their resources accumulated in the capital, people of France were abandoned to subordinated bureaucrats to oppress and exploit as they wished, without any accountability.To maintain the regality of this life style, the government needed money. To meet these growing expenses, heavy taxes were imposed on the people but the

nobility and clergy were exempted from all taxes. All high posts were monopolised by the children of nobility. Since it was a custom that property was inherited by the eldest son, other sons were employed in lucrative posts either in the army or in the church. There was virtually no chance for a commoner to enter the elite hierarchy. The institution of the army was empowered not only to fight wars for the glory of the country but also to crush any rebellion against the monarchy.

The successors of Louis XIV believed that everything was in order. While they were ensconced in the delusion that royalty was strong and safe at Versailles, many changes were taking place in society. A new middle class was emerging who had wealth and professionalism. It was intelligent and talented but deprived of political and social status. This class was far away from Versailles. Disgruntled, disappointed, and disillusioned, they were residing among impoverished common people who were without any social status in the society. They looked to the capital which was beyond their access – a city which was not like other French cities. They did not admire its grandeur but hated it as an island of oppression and exploitation which was inhabited by the rotten elements of the country – those who were living a luxurious life at the cost of the people's poverty. Perhaps Louis realised it and told his audience, "After me, the deluge." July 14 was the day when royal power was overtaken by the people's power. A crowd of people including women and children brought the king and the royal family back to Paris.

Gradually, the wrath of people was unleashed upon the ruling classes. The guillotine was set up in the city to cut the heads of the powerful and privileged. The Revolution did not spare even the king and queen. Both were guillotined publicly. Since then, the slogan of the French Revolution, 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity', appeals to the subordinated and underprivileged throughout

the world. The Declaration of Rights of man inspired them to struggle for their rights. The French Revolution has become a model. It continues to give hope to people to overthrow corrupt ruling classes. We find some similarities in our country with pre-Revolutionary France. Our ruling classes also decided to shift the capital from Karachi to Islamabad where palatial buildings have been built to accommodate them. Architecturally, these buildings show neither our historical traditions nor showcase any aesthetic beauty. They reflect the bad taste of our ruling classes. The capital is built with the purpose to be away from people – a secure place for them. The common people have been abandoned by the privileged classes. If we compare the luxury of our ruling elites and the misery of commoners who languish in ghettos without clean water and sanitation, one can realise how brutal and heartless our rulers are. From time to time, the anger of people is unleashed. They protest against injustice and demand that feudalism should be abolished. That privileged classes should pay taxes. That rule of law should be imposed. All such protests are crushed and people are herded back to their houses. In our current situation, there is no hope of any revolution. But the revenge of the people might take other shapes and forms: terrorism, dacoity, killing and murder. Security then has become the main concern of the ruling classes. As a result of this, they are searching for means to defend themselves rather than understanding the cause of these problems. They are not interested in understanding them because it might lead to them having to surrender their privileges.

Though chances of revolution are nil, but its place may be taken by anarchy and lawlessness which consequently makes life of all classes miserable. Even Islamabad will not remain a fortress of 'peace' and prosperity. We should remember July 14 and its consequences.

Surrender of power

A thing most addictive

Power intoxicates those who hold it. As soon as an individual assumes power, it transforms him from an ordinary person into a super human being. The attitude of people changes towards him and he is respected, eulogised and praised. Flatterers gather around him and express their admiration for all his actions. Wherever he goes, people pay homage to him. Everybody is ready to obey his orders. He is referred to with some high sounding titles as Fuhrer, or Il Duce. We can find one such example in our very own political history: it was sycophants who made Ayub Khan Field Marshal, without even fighting and winning any war. Surrounded by brownnosing advisers, he believed that he had extraordinary qualities and wisdom. He asserted his authority and felt a great sense of pleasure when people submitted before him. Such absolute power that he enjoyed is usually held either by monarchs or dictators. Once they assume it, they like to keep it for the rest of their life. That's why they are either removed by the dagger of the assassin or by a hatched conspiracy. They do not surrender their power voluntarily.

Those who are not killed when being deposed from their seats of power and survive as powerless, their condition is deplorable in the aftermath. As soon as they lose power, they are reduced again to ordinary persons. Those around them turn their loyalties to the next powerful man. We have many examples in history of the kings and rulers who suffered humiliation and insult after their loss of power. When Shahjahan was imprisoned in the Agra fort, all great nobles let him be and he spent the rest of his life in

isolation. Farrukhsiyar, the Mughal emperor, when removed from power by the king makers' party at the court, was imprisoned where he starved and nobody cared for his plight; later, he was mercilessly murdered. However, we do have few examples in history when the autocrats and monarchs voluntarily retired from kingship. Chandragupta Maurya (320-298 BC), the founder of the Mauryan Empire, after consolidating his dynasty and building the first great Empire, retired to spend his last years as an ascetic. He enjoyed the taste of power but realised that he should devote his time in prayer to get spiritual serenity before death. His son Bindusara succeeded him without any bloodshed. A rare example in the history of kingship.

In another example, Diocletian (284-305 AD), the Roman emperor, was famous in history because he restored the decaying Roman Empire again as a power. As the Roman Empire extended and it became difficult for an emperor to crush rebellions of different nations and tribes, he introduced a novel system to divide the empire among four emperors. This worked. Every emperor was responsible for his domain and this division aided the maintenance of peace and order. Once he achieved this, he retired and started to live as an ordinary Roman citizen. However, after his retirement, his system collapsed and the Roman Empire again plunged into disorder and chaos. A delegation of the Roman nobility went to Diocletian and requested him to take up the responsibility again. Instead of talking politics, he talked about the cultivation of cabbages and their qualities. After retirement, that had become his hobby. He was no longer interested in becoming the emperor. He preferred to cultivate cabbages and wanted to enjoy the peaceful life of an ordinary person. Another rare example of surrendering power.

But every ruler was not like Chandragupta Maurya or Diocletian. Muhammad Tughlaq, the ruler of India, faced many challenges for his rule and there were many

aspirants to the throne who took up arms against him. He faced rebellions and was under attack from all sides but he failed to crush the rebellions and adequately respond to the onslaught. At this critical moment, Ziauddin Barani, the author of Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi, advised him to abdicate and retire. He refused and died as a failed and disappointed monarch. He did not want to lose power and face defeat and humiliation. Sometimes, that is the price that a person has to pay for holding power.

In recent history, we have the example of Nelson Mandela, who after his release from prison, was elected the president of South Africa. After serving one term, he retired and left the position for others. Though he did not have political power any longer, but still he was and remains one of the most respected citizens of the world. On the other hand, there are countless examples of dictators who are reluctant to leave power and cling to their rules for dear life. In the recent demonstrations of people in the Middle East, the recalcitrant Hosni Mubarak left the presidency only after immense public pressure. He is now in prison and facing charges of corruption and massacre of peaceful citizens. In Syria, Bashar Assad is still not ready to submit to the will of the people and is subjecting them to atrocities in vain attempts to hold onto power. In Libya, Qaddafi is still taking last minute gasps to stick to power and refusing to surrender. As things stand in the Middle East at the moment, there is competition between the power of the people and the absolute power of rulers and dictators.

In Pakistan, too, only three dictators have left reluctantly under the pressure of people. One only 'vacated' the presidency after he died in accident. It shows that in the modern period, the power of people is emerging with a force and denying dictators absolute power. In democracy, transfer of power is easy. Those who are elected know that they have to surrender their power once

their designated tenure is up and have to submit themselves to the will of the people again through the electoral process. Therefore, in a democratic society, there are no executions or murders of powerful individual to decide succession battles. There is also a check on the use of power .In this case, no one individual becomes the holder of absolute power but rather the real power lies with the mass of the people.

Not the real deal

Forgery through history

The art of forgery is very old and has been documented throughout history. Those who practiced it acquired such perfection in it that it sometimes became difficult even for an expert to detect whether their forged object was the real deal or fake. Most probably, forgery began with fake coins. In the early period in the absence of technology, silver and gold coins struck by the state mint were not perfect and easily could be forged after adulteration. When these fake coins circulated in the market on the same value as the real one, forgers benefited and earned wealth easily.

One of the examples of such fake coins is found during the period of Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq who was innovative and made a number of experiments which were quite new to his time. He decided to issue copper coins with state guarantee to be treated similarly to the value of silver and gold coins. It was difficult for the traders as well as customers to use them as equal in value to that of silver and gold coins. As the royal mint was not technically well-equipped, according to the contemporary historian Ziauddin Barani, the shop of every goldsmith started to mint fake coins. Consequently, the value of copper coins dropped so much that traders refused to accept them. At this juncture, the sultan decided to withdraw these coins and announced that those possessing them would be adequately compensated. According to Barani, there was a small mountain of fake coins in front of the palace after the announcement. Thus, the scheme failed because of forgery.

In the modern period when the demand of ancient artifacts increased, it became a common practice to make fake statues, weapons, pottery, and other implements. However, scientifically and technically, it is now possible to detect these forgeries.

There was a time when fake paintings of famous artists were sold in the market but this practice is now on the down and out because lesser-known artists now sell the copies of better and more reputed artists, which are then bought by the people to decorate their home knowing that they are not real. The same is the case with historical antiquities whose copies are now available in the market or outside museums. This is not forgery.

Not only were arts and artifacts forged but there was a widespread trend of forging documents, treaties, letters, diaries, and personal papers. One of the significant examples of such forgery is the document known as 'the Donation of Constantine' .This document was attributed to the Roman emperor Constantine, who converted to Christianity. It was propagated by Popes that the emperor authorised the Pope to rule over the western part of the empire. In the 16th century, a philologist scholar got the opportunity to study it in the Vatican library and found that the document was not genuine. His conclusion was on the basis of its language which was not of Constantine's period but of the 8th century. This disclosure broke the myth which was accepted without any doubt. Thus, this set history and historical records straight.

It is now well-known that the British parliament changed the reports of diplomats to justify their foreign policy. When the British agent Alexander Brunce sent his reports from Afghanistan during the first Afghan war, they were changed and misreported to the parliament. Those who excelled in the art of forgery did not deter from even writing fake books. Although the Emperor Jahangir

wrote his own autobiography, even then someone had written a fake one in the name of the emperor. Historians found it was fake but used it as a source on the ground that it was written in the time of Jahangir's rule and valuable historical information was contained in it. This fake has now been translated into English as well and is considered a historical document along with the original. The tradition of forgery has continued in the modern period. Some years ago, somebody claimed in Germany that he had found Hitler's diaries. The news of this finding was so sensational that a leading magazine immediately purchased the rights of publication after heavy payment. After publishing a few installments, experts found that the paper, ink and style of writing betrayed the fact that the diaries were not genuine. The forger was prosecuted and punished.

Inspired by the discovery of Hitler's diaries, Pakistani bureaucrats, to please Zia-ul-Haq, discovered the diary of Quaid Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in which it was advised that presidential system is suitable to Pakistan. However, the plan soon collapsed when Khurshid, the former private secretary of the Quaid, announced that he did not write such a diary.

The diary of Ann Frank is very famous and is considered by WW II sufferers to be a canonical text documenting what many people went through. However, some experts have expressed their doubt about its genuineness. It is pointed out that it was written by a ball point which was not invented at that time. However, forged or real, it is used politically by vested interests. Interestingly, there was another kind of forgery common throughout history too: that was when some imposter claimed to be a prince, claimant to the throne, or inheritor of some property. So, forgery wasn't restricted to just on one field and no area of life was free from it from its

variegated aspects. Apart from being an interesting fact of history, it is more than anything a showcase of the 'innovative' nature of men.

Pakistan becoming more fundamentalist

Lahore-based Pakistani scholar and activist thinks that 'in the beginning the state was fundamentalist but now the wider society is increasingly becoming extremist'

by Yoginder Sikand

Mubarak Ali, a leading Pakistani scholar and Lahore-based activist, has been a teacher at the University of Sindh where he used to teach history. Presently, Mr Mubarak is the editor of the Urdu quarterly 'Tarikh', and a guiding light to many emerging historians. With this much experience, his gaze still inspects the spirit of Pakistan in 21st century. This time Mubarak Ali talked on Islam and militancy in contemporary Pakistan.**What do you feel about the current madrasa talk in Pakistan?** Much of this talk is exaggerated. On the whole, the madrasas could create narrow-minded, sectarian students but not terrorists. Not all Taliban had their education from madrasas. But, we have seen that they (Taliban) also included young people educated in modern schools or colleges. They were influenced by the television, radio, newspapers and textbooks. During the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, the Americans motivated madrasa students to engage in armed jehad and prepared for them special textbooks glorifying 'holy war'. Afterwards, when Mulla Omar took power in Afghanistan, he encouraged these students to join him. During this period, they were militarily trained and fought for the new regime in Afghanistan.**How can madrasas be reformed?** In Pakistan, even the modern educational system is quite

madrasa-like as far as the curriculum is concerned. The only way out is to radically change and reform the curriculum and introduce social sciences. Instead of realising this necessity, our government is bent upon introducing natúral sciences in the madrasa syllabus and providing them with computers. I think this is a useless exercise. It is the social sciences that make people think and help them open their minds.**How successful has Musharraf government been in its dealing with the madrasas?**The Musharraf government lacks vision as far as education is concerned. Musharraf is trying to please both the Americans as well as the mullahs. He is attempting to register the madrasas, but the mullahs have resisted this move and he has no courage to defy them. I think the best way out of the dilemma is to establish faculties of theology at the college and university level and to abolish the madrasa system altogether.**Do you think Pakistani society is ready to redefine Islam with democracy, human rights, women's rights, religious pluralism etc?**As I see it, Pakistan is becoming more fundamentalist day-by-day. In the beginning, the state was fundamentalist. But now, the society at large is increasingly becoming extremist. Mullah is free to issue any fatwa he wants. Rich people in Pakistan prefer to give donations to a madrasa or a mosque rather than to an organisation working for social development. Dictatorship and 'feudal democracy' have disappointed the people, and economic hardship and social problems are forcing them to take refuge in religion. There is little hope for a real democracy in Pakistan. The army is all-powerful and has increased in size, consuming more and more of the country's resources and leaving little for the people. As the nature of state has changed in accordance with the interests of the ruling classes, there is shocking lack of respect for human rights. State institutions treat people as subjects and not citizens. In such a situation, the interpretation of religion is also backward. In presence of Hudood

ordinance, women are denied their rights. The religious minorities are often made victims of the blasphemy law. There is little effort being made to develop new Islamic perspectives on issues of contemporary concern. **What are your views on the current relations between Muslims and the West, and on the emergence of Islamist radicalism?**There are several reasons for the emergence of Islamist radicalism and anti-West feelings among the Muslim community. What has happened, and is still happening, to the Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Palestine and Kashmir etc has convinced people that there is a conspiracy against the Muslims by the Christians, Jews and the Hindus. And so, growing numbers of Muslims feel that the only way out is to adopt the path of 'holy war', turning their backs on dialogue. Widespread poverty and economic backwardness is another reason, leading to the feeling of extreme helplessness among many Muslims. Acts of violence provide them with some 'satisfaction' that they can still terrify even their powerful 'enemies'.

Pluralism and society

In a pluralist society, where people of all religions, creeds and ethnicity live together, emerges an understanding among different faiths that there is no absolute truth and all religions have their own truth which is observed by their followers. This concept creates tolerance and promotes a shared culture. As a result of this, this shared culture eliminates religious prejudice and bigotry and broadens minds to recognize the values, traditions, and cultural practices of other communities. Those societies who pass through this process produce a composite and vibrant culture which is full of new ideas and thoughts. In a free atmosphere, scholars, artists, musicians, dancers, and scientists find space to express their creativity without any fear and hindrance. When people participate in each other's festivals and social gatherings, they realize the richness of cultural values and thoroughly enjoy all kinds of celebrations irrespective of their religious colour. Religion or ethnicity which generally bar communication become weak forces and people in their daily routine of life integrate into a compound society and have a sence of common identity.

The other side of pluralism is that absence of an absolute truth creates doubt and skepticism which leads to agnosticism and secularization of mind. It is difficult for an individual to believe in and grapple with many truths. He is always in search of the absolute one. It becomes problematic to reconcile with this situation. Sometimes, it leads to a comparative study of religions in order to find the real truth. The study generally culminates in two points of view. In one, the findings are that there are similarities in

all religions and their motive is to reform humankind, to provide spiritual satisfaction and to prevent humankind from commiting crime and sin. This concept leads to understanding and integration of different religious values. The idea of inter-religious dialogue is not only to prevent religious conflicts but also to defend religions from the development of new scientific, teachnological and philosophical ideas which are becoming a serious threat to all religious beliefs. However, on the other hand, to some, the result of comparative study of religions is to find faults in other faiths and assert the superiority of theirs. They, believing that God is on their side, want to convert not only their society but the whole of humankind. This approach leads to religious extremism; it becomes a holy mission to transform all according to their beliefs.

The best example of creating religious harmony was that of the Mughal emperor Akbar, who founded the Ibadat Khana or house of worship and invited scholars of different religions to present teachings of their religions. As a result, there emerged contradictions and similarities and no single religion appeared to possess the absolute truth. It brought all religions together on the basis of equality. It changed the character of the Mughal state. It treated all people equally irrespective of their faith. That was the success of the Mughal rule. It unleashed the energy of society to create a shared culture which promoted tolerance and a model pluralistic society.

Take the case of Pakistan. With respect to religion, it is not a pluralistic society. A significant majority of the people is Muslim and believes in the absolute truth of their religion. The non-Muslim religious communities are isolated and marginalised. The majority does not participate in their festivals and share their cultural practices. Therefore, instead of integration, attempts are made to separate and isolate them. Occasional religious conflicts create a sense of alienation and insecurity in these minority

communities. As a result of this, society is deprived of their participation in cultural and social development.

In the absence of religious pluralism, society is divided into a number of religious sects. Each sect believes the absolute truth of its sectarian beliefs and denies the truth of others. The result is sectarian dissension and conflict. Conflict breeds extremism and hostility towards one's rival sects. Consequently, society is involved in bloody clashes and riots, wasting its energy and money on security rather than investing in social, cultural, and economic development. People live in a constant state of fear. Whereupon, it disintegrates society, Pakistan is praying a heavy price of the absence of religious pluralism as there is no freedom. Our scholars are not in a position to contribute original ideas and theories to social sciences. Artists are prevented from expressing their skill to prevent hurting the sensibilities of extremists. Intellectually, society has become barren. There is nothing but sermons based on sectarianism, insistence on their absolute truth, and criticizing other religions and rival sects.

There is a lesson of history that only tolerant societies advancement and those who choose the path of extremism, lunge into backwardness. We can learn this lesson only when we study history.

Talking heads

I remember the old days when there was only one TV channel which telecast not only news but dramas, films, documentaries, musical shows and literary programmes. In the beginning, the arrival of private channels was exciting. We all hoped that there would be competition and we could watch a variety of programmes. These hopes were soon dashed to ground. These channels offer something new what is now popularly known as the 'talk show'.

Every TV channel is faithfully following the same cookie cutter pattern of the talk show without any change or innovation, generally, on the same topic and with the same persons. It has become a routine matter that two groups of experts, having opposite point of views, are invited to face each other and provide entertainment to the viewers. It has replaced the drama series of the PTV of yore. There are the same few experts who keenly take part in every discussion on different channels. They are politicians, journalists, and occasionally representatives from different public sectors.

In most cases, the anchor person tries to show his own expertise and speaks most of the time. Instead of asking questions he expresses his own views, and sometimes forces the experts to follow his line of arguments. He allows each person to present his point of view within one minute and moves to another person. The result is that nobody gets time to finish his argument.

There are some professional experts who are on every channel and speak on every topic with confidence. As they have acquired experience of how to impress viewers and how to demoralize their adversaries, they shout

loudly. If the other side is not capable of shouting in response, it means they win the contest. Recently, I watched a programme on Pakistani textbooks. There were 3 persons on one side and 3 were facing them to respond to their shouting. The topic was to analyse Pakistani textbooks. On the one side were three academicians who were speaking softly to express their point of view. On the other side, were professional experts of TV talk shows. They shouted with full force and knocked down the other party. Instead of discussing Pakistani textbooks, their argument was that the American textbooks avoid telling the truth to their students and do not mention their aggression in Vietnam. His companion pointed out that British textbooks do not inform their students about their imperialism. The gist of the argument then turns out to be that if Americans and Europeans are not telling the truth, then why should we?

Recently, I watched a programme which was being conducted on history. I was curious to know the views of the participants. The discipline of history is changing rapidly and there are fresh perspectives cropping up to facilitate greater understanding. I was happy that this topic was chosen instead of a hackneyed one. A professor of history was there whose knowledge of history and performance shocked me. A prominent literary figure also joinded and expressed his views on history. Regarding Mahmud of Ghaznavi, he referred to Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The 'expert' stated that he invaded India along with 200 elephants crossing the Hindukush. So, it was claimed that Mahmud superseded Hannibal who crossed the Alps with elephants. I was shocked by the ignorance of the so-called expert. My God, first of all, there are no elephants in Afghanistan or Central Asia. Moreover, the route of his Invasion was the Khyber Pass. I doubt that Gibbon made such a blunder. Nonetheless, one should apply one's knowledge and

common sense before accepting such things. Even the professor present on the show did not correct him and kept his silence. It is sad that our history which was already being distorted by our textbooks is now being further obliterated by these TV channels.

Some talk shows, in the hope of making the show more colourful and entertaining, have introduced a new trend of inviting the audience for an open Q-and-A session. It provides a good opportunity to those who are good speakers and shout aggressively to get applause from the audience. I was on the panel in some of discussions and miserably failed to convince the audience of my point of view and the audience was unreceptive of reasoned logic. Sentimental dialogue, emotional rhetoric, and reiterating of popular views are liked by the viewers and audience in most cases.

These talk shows, instead of providing knowledge or creating awareness and consciousness, entertain the viewers by inciting the panelists to exchange unparliamentarily dialogues and insult each other. Such a show is regarded very successful and gets high ratings. However, repeatedly showing the same programme with the same people has become boring and uninteresting. As there is no creativity among TV anchor person, they are resorting to other easier alternatives to make their shows interesting.

These talk shows have reduced the academic standards of dialogue to nothing and have converted discussions into nothing but a tamasha. To make it appealing, they sensationalise issues instead of substantively discussing them. Not only do political scandals provide enough material but politicians are also everready to take part in this, especially in order to either justify their party stance or to oppose their adversaries. Such hollow discussions are changing the mindset of society. There is no soberness in our daily discussions;

rather they are animated by emotion and emotional concerns. Reasoning requires knowledge and emotional appeals are the best way to hide a lack of knowledge. These talk shows truly represent our intellectual hollowness and bankruptcy.

What is revolution?

As our political, social and economic situation is deteriorating and, as a result of it, common people are facing hardships in life, there is an urge to change the system in order to get rid of corruption and disorder. The idea of change by introducing reforms appeals nobody. At this stage people talk of revolution. It is in the collective memory of people that how in history revolutions radically changed societies by eradicating old system and replacing it with a progressive one. The French, the Russian, and the Chinese revolutions become models to them. However, as Marx remarks in The Eighteenth Brumaire that man makes his own history but not according to his wishes, therefore, before thinking about revolution, we have to understand its meaning and concept historically.

The original meaning of revolution is to revolve in a circle. In ancient Greece, their political system revolved around Tyranny oligarchy, and democracy. In this concept there is no change in basic structure. This suited the ruling classes who did not want any change in the system in order to retain their status intact.

Rebellion in the medieval period was the mode to challenge existing government against the measures which were harmful or damaging to certain sections of society such as peasants, slaves or aristocracy. Members of royal family rebelled to claim the right of succession. Rebellions, generally did not want any basic change of social structure but to replace the government which could accept their demands.

In case of the Muslims, the medieval jurist Al Mawardi, in his book Al Ahkam al Sultaniya advised

people to recognize usurpers and not to raise any voice against them. However, in spite of these legal bindings, rebellions occurred throughout history as a solution of problems.

Resistance movements, on the other hand, made attempts at forcing government to alleviate their grievances such as the Diggers, and the Levelers in 17th century's England pressed the government to grant them right of vote and to abolish the House of Lords, which was the seat of aristocracy. In India, during the colonial period, Moplas of South India, resisted against the taxes and demanded to abolish them.

The third mode of challenging the existing system was a war of independence. It was an armed struggle against the colonial powers who occupied a country. In 1857, the Indians fought against the English in an attempt to expel them from India. The Americans successfully struggled against the British and won their independence. Thomas Pen, the author of Common Sense who participated in this war and whose book inspired common people to fight for liberty, called it revolution. Since then, instead of war of independence, it became a revolution.

The revolution acquired a new meaning after the French Revolution in 1789. It changed not only political structure but replaced the social and cultural values and customs. The changes occurred as a result of violence. The revolutionary forces eliminated those elements which were obstacles to implement the new system. The same process was followed in the Russian and the Chinese Revolutions.

As the concept of revolution is to change a society, historians point out two processes on the basis of historical evidence. Firstly, when a society changes gradually and, secondly, when it turns upside down within a short span of time. Keeping this in view, historians argue that there was a Scientific Revolution which brought slow but solid changes in the outlook of people. Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, and

Einstein changed the views about nature and the world. The invention of printing press widely disseminated knowledge which equipped people to understand their environment rationally. It was a victory of rationalism, over dogma.

Toynbee, a historian of the 18th century, called to the process of industrialization a revolution because as a result of it, society shifted from feudalism to industry. It inaugurated a culture which was antithetical to feudalism.

In most of the Asian and African countries, after the independence from colonialism there were no reolutions on the model of the French, the Russian and the Chinese. On the contrary, there were military coupe d'etat. It is also known as Bonapartism because Napoleon Bonaparte captured power in 1799 by overthrowing government with the help of army. He occupied the assembly hall and made legislators hostage and proclaimed himself as the First Consul, the supreme political authority, following the Roman tradition.

Afterward, the pattern has changed. A military general declares to overthrow the government and the army occupies TV and radio stations. President and Prime Minister Houses are captured and they are imprisoned. After declaring emergency, all political parties are banned. Trade unions and students' bodies declared illegal. Media is advised to carry only censored news. To legitimize the coup, the past government is accused of corruption and mishandling the state affairs. When Ayub Khan imposed martial law, he called it a revolution. But, in fact, instead of a change, his rule destroyed the democratic institutions and traditions which consequently plunged the country into disorder.

In a global world where capitalism is dominating, it is difficult for a single country to bring a revolution and survive. Immediately, it is besieged by the capitalist powers and sanctions are imposed to strangulate it. This happened in the case of Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. Cuba is

a hard nut to crack and survives in spite of all sanctions. Therefore, it is argued that to compete with global capitalism, there should be global revolution. For such an event, we have to wait.

The scribes of the times

Writing history has always been a difficult task for historians. Those who were employed to write the history of kings and Nobels had to highlight their achievements and hide their weaknesses and crimes. Such historical accounts provide information about court life and movement of the rulers but ignore the activities of the rest of the common people. However, there are examples when, under harsh condition, some historians tried to accuse and criticize the reigning monarch and endured hard punishment. In ancient China, one historian, whose body parts were amputated because of writing an unfavourable account about the king, declared that he wrote only such history which could provide full knowledge and create historical consciousness for the future generation. Though he suffered badly but his history survived all the vicissitudes of politics.

Some historians were clever about how to depict the sorry and dismal condition prevalent and inserted their intended meaning between lines. Shams Siraj Afif, the author of *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* mentions an event of Firuz Shah Tughlaq when the Sultan was on his way to the palace. He saw a soldier along with his horse coming from the office of registration. The Sultan asked him whether the soldier registered his name for the army. The soldier replied in the negative telling that the officer in charge demanded two ashrafis as a bribe. As he did not have the amount, his name was not registered. The Sultan was moved by his story and immediately gave him two ashrafis and asked him to go to the office and get himself registered. The

author praises the Sultan; how generous and kindhearted was he. But one can easily glean the real meaning of the story that corruption was so prevalent that even the Sultan could not control it.

A different example is that of Abdul Qadir Badayuni, the author of Muntakhib-al-Tawarikh. It was written secretly criticizing Akbar and his religious policy. It provides information which is not available in other contemporary sources. When Emperor Jahangir came to know about it, he inquired his son about it who expressed his ignorance about the book. Now it is one of the important sources on the reign of Akbar. However, with few exceptions, majority of the sources are full of praise and admiration for their patrons. It was not an easy task for historians to write accurately about what actually happened. They had to present the point of view of the court who employed them to undertake this job.

There was a change in history writing when the Mughal dynasty declined and rulers as well as nobility lost power and resources. Historians started to write independently, away from the courts, and accused the ruling classes for the decline of the dynasty. We find portraits of emperors and nobels as debaucherous, intriguers and cowards.

During the colonial period, the East India Company assigned the task to some historians to write history that justified its rule in view of the chaotic political and social situation. History was used as a tool to legitimise the rule of the Company.

Keeping this background in view, at present, it has become very difficult for historians in Pakistan to write correct history. As there ethnic nationalism, sectarianism and tribalism are on the rise, people have become very sensitive of their identity. Every group and community has its own heroes and traitors. They have constructed their own version of history which provides them with pride of

their past and strengthens their identity. If anything is written or said against it, it is regarded as a violation. One of the examples is the role of Ahmad Shah Abdali who is greatly revered to as baba or father. To the people of Punjab and North India, he was an aggressor and an invader who plundered, looted and massacred people. In Punjab, there is a proverb that states that eat whatever you have because the rest will be taken by Ahmad Shah. People of Sindh still remember the invasion of the Afghans and the trapping of their horses by the calls of "ghora re ghora" or "horses, oh, horses". These words remind them of the Afghan invasion. To the Pashtuns, he is a hero but to others he is an aggressor. Can these two views be reconciled? It is an important question.

A similar case arises with the history of Sindh and Balochistan. To struggle for their rights they created heroes from the past and present them as models to continue their political struggle. If any attempt is made to evaluate these heroes correctly, it would hurt the sensibilities of these nationalist groups.

Although it is the task of the historian to analyse and criticise without taking into account ethnic or sectarian feelings but there are political and social pressures to write a certain kind of history or to remain silent. As society is breaking up in ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian groups, it is becoming more difficult day by day to write history objectively; a history which will create consciousness and not history which will mislead people.

Shades of the past

History is a double edged sword; on the one hand it creates political and social consciousness and tolerance, on the other it can turn a society prejudiced, narrow minded and intolerant. Interpreted with a political, social, religious and economic perspective, its impact can vary; it depends in the conditions history is written and the interests it represents.

In the religious historiography, the task of history is to fulfil the divine mission. According to it, man has no power to interfere in the process; he is just a passive actor having no choice of his own. Following this method attempts are made to find an ideal period in history pristine and virtuous enough to be presented as a model. In fact, according to this point of view, historical forces have exhausted their energy and vitality in shaping and building such a society and while man moved from this ideal period, he polluted and distorted its purity and simplicity and made progress impossible in damaging and disfiguring traditions and values.

Consequently, according to the religious interpretation, the salvation of humankind lies in reviving the past and revitalizing its purity. Naturally, this type of history is written with religious passion and devotion leaving no space for criticism or analysis. It paints the past as romantic and the present is portrayed as dark, ugly and sinful.

The other angle is that progress plays a vital role in shaping historical thoughts and human society is continuously changing for the better in spite of obstacles

and hindrances. It is evident from history that society has moved from savagery to intellectual maturity; history is not an uninterrupted process and there are changes and jerks which reshape and reconstruct it. When history is written with a progressive point of view, it makes the past look dark and unromantic which cannot be revived and replicated. It rejects any ideal or golden period in history. However, this concept of history is used as a tool by imperial powers to subdue and enslave the weaker nations in the name of progress and civilization.

Muslim scholars writing on the history of the Indian subcontinent adopt religious point of view and mention historical events as they happened without analyzing them, believing that everything comes from God and man has no choice in changing the course of history. As most of the historians of the Saltanat and the Mughal periods were religious scholars, they eulogise those rulers who observed religious practices and those who avoided religious rituals were severely criticized and condemned. Ziauddin Barani, a contemporary historian of the Saltanat period and the writer of Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi accuses Alauddin Khilji and Muhammad Tughluq because of their nonreligious policies while admires, Iltumish, Nasiruddin Mahmud, Balban and Firuz Shah as devoted Muslims. Abdul Qadir Badayuni blames Akbar for violation of Islamic teachings without mentioning his achievements as a ruler.

Moreover, the focus of their historical interpretation is to describe the contribution of rulers, nobility, and sufi saints only. Ziauddin Barani writes that it is the task of history to provide information and knowledge about prophets, saints, and ulema because they are the people who achieved fame as a result of their virtuous character and their personal qualities. On the other hand, those who are considered low-caste, upstart, impure, common, wretched, nameless, and worthless should have no place in history and study of history is of no use to them because it

is beyond their understanding. He argues that history is useful only to rulers and great religious scholars and only they have the intellectual capacity to learn from it. Barani's exclusion of common people from history is significant; they do not contribute to it, so why should they study it?

The historians of the medieval period confined the knowledge of history only to the ruling classes who could learn lessons from past politics and improve their methods of governance. To warn the rulers, such historians also discussed the rise and fall of ruling dynasties and nations of the past to show why they disappeared in the oblivion. In fact, their argument was that the rulers should be just if only with the aim of being remembered positively by the future generations.

As most of the historians were employed by rulers to record their history, the focus of their narratives was kings, nobels and their political and military exploits. Other classes and their role were either marginalized or ignored altogether.

However, the Indian historiography radically changed in the 18th century when the Mughal dynasty declined and the royal court failed to patronize historians and scholars. It liberated them from the court and its restrictions. They moved from royal circle to common people and started to write a different kind of history which was not only one of the political chaos but also of the social and cultural life of the society. They also traveled extensively throughout the country to discover life and conditions of the people. The result was a rich history containing colourful varieties of social life. Murshid Quli Khan's Murraqa' Dehli is one of the examples of this type of history. It is a charming portrayal of the city during the declining period of the Mughal Empire. There are graphic details of moral decadence of the ruling classes, who, unaware of political disintegration, were busy in amusement and festivities.

During this period the power of the Mughals was decentralized and provincial states were emerging as resourceful powers. The history of these states was not one of decline but of successes and achievements.

Historians, poets, and scholars sought their patronage and produced local histories and also history of cities which enriched the historiography.

Decadence and decline are no obstacles for those writing history. Historians, as a matter of fact, get more material to write of society that is morally, culturally and politically broken. In this case, they have to find out the causes of change and analyse them in order to understand the process of decline. History, in this case becomes a tool that helps to understand the past of a society.

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